

Craigston and Meldrum Estates, Carriacou, 1769–1841

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SUMMARY

An account of two plantations in the British West Indies, together with a description of the houses and their contents and some facts concerning William Urquhart, surveyor, drawn from the papers in the archive at Craigston Castle, Aberdeenshire.

INTRODUCTION

Among the eighteenth-century drawings preserved at Craigston Castle are a number of surveys by William Urquhart. Twenty-seven of these made between 1777 and 1782 are of the Aberdeenshire properties of the Urquharts of Craigston. The twenty-eighth, dating from 1788, is of two plantations, Craigston and Meldrum, on the island of Carriacou in the West Indies. In attempting to discover something more of the work of this particular surveyor I was led to other papers in the Craigston archive dealing with these West Indian properties, and from them it is possible to reconstruct something of the history of the two plantations and the links between them and Scotland, but more particularly with NE Scotland, in the years 1769–1841.

The papers are in five groups: first a number of deeds dating from the years 1769–77, written in a selection of vile bad hands on parchments that have been damaged by insects. Secondly, a number of abstracts and copies of letters between William Urquhart of Craigston and his brother John, his nephew William Arbuthnott, his attorney in Grenada, Edmund Thornton, and Thomas Campbell of John Campbell Sen and Co. These cover the years 1770–94. Thirdly two letters from William Urquhart, the surveyor, to William Urquhart of Craigston. Fourthly a series of letters for the years 1804–12 from William Robertson, the manager of the plantations, to John Urquhart of Craigston, the son of William Urquhart. Lastly letters and accounts covering the years 1838–41. None of the series is complete, and invariably the correspondence is one-sided. At least half the story is missing. Seldom is there a letter with a reply. Many things have to be inferred. Fortunately the letter writers of the period were remarkably graphic and it is possible to put together a very clear picture of the history of the two plantations.

In addition to the survey and letters there is also at Craigston a copy of a map: 'A NEW and ACCURATE MAP of the ISLAND of CARRIACOUE in the WEST INDIES'. It is undated and as the copy is a lithograph by W Morrison of Fenchurch Street it must date from the early years of the nineteenth century. From internal evidence the original, from which it was made, dates from the period between the death of John Urquhart in 1785 and that of his eldest brother, William Urquhart, in 1796.

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Two other documents that are not in the Craigston archive have been used: one is a letter from William Robinson to John Urquhart, which has found its way into the Urquhart of Meldrum papers but which has been included as it is properly part of the story. The other is also a map, 'A NEW and ACCURATE MAP of the ISLAND of CARRIACOU in the WEST INDIES'. This was surveyed by Walter Fenner in 1784 and is clearly the basis for the Craigston map, although in the intervening years there had been considerable changes in the pattern and ownership of the estates on the island. The original is in the British Library. It has been impossible to obtain any information from sources in Grenada before, during, or since the disturbances of 1983.

THE FAMILY

The Urquharts of Craigston were descended from a cadet branch of the Urquharts of Meldrum and the relationship between the various members of the families of Meldrum, Craigston and Byth is complicated and best expressed by a tree (illus 1).

Those members mentioned in the papers and concerned with the two plantations in the first generation are William Urquhart of Craigston 1741–96, William's two brothers, James—who went for a soldier—and John, 'Jock', of Carriacou 1750–85 who bought the plantation in 1770, and their sister Mary Urquhart 1739–1818, who married Robert Arbuthnot of Haddo-Rattray. In the second generation are William's son, John, who succeeded to the Aberdeenshire and the West Indian estates on the death of his father in 1796, and William Arbuthnott, his cousin and son of Mary Urquhart. He went out to the plantations in 1783 but had returned before 1804. Of cousins there were William Urquhart of Meldrum, who went out to Carriacou in 1775–6 as a partner to his cousin, John, and James Urquhart of Byth, whose manufactory was to provide material for the slaves' clothing for a time.

William Urquhart c 1757–90, the surveyor was no relation, or at least not a generally acknowledged one, being apparently the son of James Urquhart, an old servant of Captain John Urquhart of Craigston and Cromarty, the father of William, James, John and Mary.

THE ISLAND

Carriacou, a small island in the Grenadines, lying 12° N of the equator and to the NE of Grenada, measures some five miles from N to S, with a width from E to W that varies between two and five miles. It is hilly, rising to 954 ft at Chapeau Carré in the S, and 955 ft at High North at the northern end of the island. The only town is Hillsborough on the west coast, although there are several widely scattered villages. In the eighteenth century these villages did not exist except as slave quarters on the estates; apart from Hillsborough the population was concentrated on the plantations.

The island, which has always been a dependency of Grenada, had originally been French but had been ceded to Great Britain in 1762. Captured by the French in 1779 during the War of the American Rebellion it was returned to Great Britain under the terms of the Treaty of Paris in 1783. It remained a British colony until 1974 when Grenada became independent, and Carriacou now forms part of the territory of that state.

Throughout the eighteenth century and until the defeat of Napoleon in 1815 the West Indian islands were always at risk from a sudden descent of the French. The defences to counter this threat were never at Carriacou as elaborate as on the larger islands. Nevertheless they were enough to make a landing a hazardous business as long as they were properly manned. There

were 16 batteries around the coast – that above Hillsborough being the most elaborate, and from the map at Craigston the armament seems to have consisted of 17 18-pound guns, 13 9-pounders, four 6-pounders and four 10 inch mortars. Later a block house was built, but this was not for defence against the French.

The prosperity of the island, as with so many of its neighbours ended with the emancipation of the slaves in 1838. Emancipation itself was not the cause but it was impossible with free labour to compete with the sugar and cotton being produced by the slaves of Cuba and the southern United States, or by the indentured labourers of Guiana, whose condition was really little better than slavery. Even this might have been countered had Sir Robert Peel not introduced his free trade budgets in the 1840s, which ended the high protective duties against slave grown sugar, contrary to his own pledge; ‘But when’, to quote Anthony Trollope, ‘did Sir Robert Peel’s pledge in one year bind even his own conduct in the next?’. When he wrote this, Trollope’s sympathies were with the white planters, but the suffering and poverty of the freed slaves, resulting from this policy, were probably greater. What survived Peel was finally destroyed by the development of the European sugar beet industry.

Today the economy of Carriacou is based, in so far as it exists at all, on limes, tourism and foreign aid, but in the last decades of the eighteenth century the pattern was very different. The island was divided c 1790 between some 46 estates ranging in size from the modest 10 acres of Monsieur Belmar, a property not even dignified by a name, to the lordly 698 acres of *Dumfries*.

It is interesting to compare the Craigston map with Fenner’s map of 1784 on which it is based. The 1784 map was probably made shortly after the island had returned to British control and is an attractive work with hachuring and hill shading giving a very clear picture of the broken terrain of the island (illus 2). None of the factory buildings shown on the later map is indicated but some attempt is made to suggest which estate houses were set within formal planting. This is particularly true of *Harvey Vale* which appears to have been enclosed within a screen of trees, with an avenue leading westward to give a prospect of the sea. Landscaping is also shown at *Dumfries*, *Grand Bay* and *Limlair*.

The greatest difference between the two maps is to be found in the changed size and ownership of the estates. Only four plantations, *Beau Sejour*, *Mount Pleasant*, *Craigston* and *Meldrum*, had remained the same size; elsewhere the pattern was for the larger estates to expand at the expense of their smaller neighbours, and for the French planters to have been replaced by others of English and, more particularly, Scots, stock. Indicative of this cultural change is the fact that 16 acres shown as forming the glebe land of the Parson in 1793 were shown in 1783 as belonging to the Priest (illus 3).

By c 1793 23 estates were over 100 acres in size, and eight over 300 acres. At 317 acres *Craigston* was the seventh in extent. This was not in itself representative of the true wealth of the greater proprietors, whose interests might extend over several plantations. William Urquhart of Craigston, who c 1793 held *Craigston*, *Meldrum*, and *Prospect* with a total of 601 acres, was the fourth largest landholder on the island, only exceeded by Mrs Milne with 1516 acres, the heirs of John McLean with 1016 acres, and John Dallas with 888 acres. A strange figure is George McLean who had an interest in several estates totalling 1663 acres; he, or his son, reappears in 1839. A number of French families were still on the island, the Duviviers, the St Hilaires – who had been there when John Urquhart arrived in 1770 – and the St Louis amongst them, and the French influence was still to be seen in some of the estate names, *Bel-Air*, *Beau Sejour*, *L’Ance la Roche*, *La Resource* and *Petit Careenage*. These names still survive although the estates to which they once belonged have changed beyond all recognition.



ILLUS 2 A New and Accurate Map of the Island of Carriacou in the West Indies: Walter Fenner 1784. (Copyright: The British Library)



ILLUS 3 A New and Accurate Map of the Island of Carriacou in the West Indies: re-drawn from Fenner c 1785-96 and lithographed in the 19th century

More important to the island after it was lost to the French was the influx of British, or more accurately, and to use the eighteenth-century idiom, North British planters – Cumming, Reid, McKellar, McLean, Kirkland, Milne, Robertson and Urquhart, with their estates of *Dumfries*, *Craigston*, *Meldrum*. The names of their managers and apprentices, the Arbuthnots, Reids, Simpsons, Brands, Lauries, Grants, Cruickshanks, Robertsons, Bells and Mitchells all tell the same story: Carriacou was in a fair way to becoming a colony of North Britain, but especially that part of the northern kingdom that lies between the Dee and the Deveron.

The principal products of the island were cotton certainly, sugar possibly and, at an earlier period, some indigo. The map at Craigston shows that in addition to the estate houses there were on the larger estates windmills and factories, seven of the former and six of the latter, *Dumfries*, *Limlair* and *Beau Sejour* having both, *Breteche*, *Grand Bay*, *Hermitage* and *Bel-Air* having windmills, and *Mount Pleasant*, *Harvey Vale* and *Craigston* having factories.

The windmills were almost certainly associated with the crushing of the cane and can still be identified on the modern map of the island. The factories too would normally be associated with sugar estates indicating the presence of a boiling house – a view expressed to me in correspondence by Dr Buisseret. However, there is no record of sugar having been produced at *Craigston*, which from 1769 until 1815 had always been a cotton plantation; the ruins of this building, of which the chimney survives largely intact, are known as the ‘old cotton factory’ and it is not marked as a sugar mill on the OS map. Before 1769 there was an attempt to produce indigo at *Meldrum*. Possibly *Mount Pleasant* and *Harvey Vale* were also cotton plantations.

From the Craigston map and the correspondence it is possible to make an estimate of the population of the island in the mid-1790s. The slaves at *Dumfries*, a plantation of 698 acres, numbered 352, those at *Craigston*, where the acreage was 317, totalled 165. On both estates this provided one slave to every 1.9 acres. On *Meldrum*, however, with 153 acres, there were only 35 slaves, a ratio of one slave to 4.3 acres, and this was an imbalance that William Robinson, the manager, later tried to correct. The rector, Mr Nash, had four slaves and 16 acres, a proportion nearer to *Meldrum’s*, but as these slaves were probably house servants rather than field hands the pattern is distorted. The ratio of slaves to acres on both *Craigston* and *Meldrum* is one slave to 2.35 acres, and this probably strikes a reasonable balance between the larger and smaller estates. With a total acreage on the island under cultivation of 7410 acres it gives a probable slave population of 3153, and it is very unlikely that the white population on the estates and in Hillsborough exceeded 400.

Following the disturbances in the French islands in the early 1790s the Grenada Assembly passed an ordinance requiring there to be one white man to every 50 slaves. This would have meant a staff of four on the combined plantations of *Craigston* and *Meldrum* in addition to William Arbuthnot.

THE STORY

The three sons of Captain John Urquhart conformed to the accepted pattern of their times. William, the eldest, inherited the family estates; James, the second, went for a soldier, and John, the youngest went – almost – into trade. Writing to his uncle, Keith Urquhart of Meldrum, in 1766, William says that

... My brother Jock told me he would acquaint you himself of his going to Holland to be educate for a merchant, he is recommended to a very good Dutch House at Rotterdam, where I'm in hopes he will do well as he begins to like his business, and I always think it an advantage to a young man, and that he will probably do better when he is removed from his friends. . . .

Fortunately John was not to sink to the counting house: he ventured his patrimony in a more genteel undertaking, and in 1770 bought a plantation on the island of Carriacou. It is curious that to be a West Indian Planter was at the time socially more acceptable than to be an East Indian Nabob. In his thesis on *Land Management in North-Eastern Scotland* Dr I R Grant makes the point that

In a number of instances families not only traded with, but owned, or held long leases on plantations in the West Indies. A common pattern was for a younger member of the family to manage the overseas investments while the head of the family remained in Britain.

The references to West Indians and West Indian properties, which occur in many novels of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, clearly indicate that the Caribbean connection formed very much a part of the social pattern of the period. That it figures in two of Jane Austen's novels – lightly in *Persuasion* and, more importantly, as the turning point of the plot in *Mansfield Park* – establishes this point. The acceptability of this connection sprang of course from its basis in land. There were estates and estate houses and an attempted re-creation of the life of the British landed classes. That the estates were mostly heavily mortgaged, the houses but slight and at several removes from their British exemplars, and their owners frequently betrayed by their speech and behaviour their descent from the buccaneers and strumpets of an earlier generation were all obscured by the wealth displayed by the planters when in London or Bath. The fact that the wealth squandered on these visits may have been the accumulated revenues of many years did not matter. It was wealth, and it came from land: it also came from the sweat and misery of a large slave population. But this latter fact hardly mattered – except to a few Evangelicals – or if it did it was not allowed to tarnish the undoubted respectability of that wealth. The attitude of most people in the 1770s was well expressed in Cowper's ironic lines

I own I am shock'd at the purchase of slaves,
And fear those who buy them and sell them are knaves;
What I hear of their hardships, their tortures, and groans;
Is almost enough to draw pity from stones.

I pity them greatly, but I must be mum,
For how could we do without sugar and rum?
Especially sugar, so needful we see?
What? give up our desserts, our coffee, and tea!

Fortunately the respectability of the Evangelicals won in the end.

By 1770 when John Urquhart made his purchase the pattern was beginning to change. As Dr T M Devine has pointed out in his study of eighteenth-century Glasgow-West India merchants, the indebtedness to Glasgow business houses of the planters frequently led to foreclosures, and there seems to have been a general decline of the original planter aristocracy about this time throughout the British West Indies.

The plantation bought on mortgage by John Urquhart on the 22 June 1770 is described as 'A plantation in the Grande Ance division of Carriacou, containing 40 quarries of land being 120 English Acres more or less.' It had belonged to Robert Maxwell of *Carriacou* and John Maxwell of *Terraughtie* in the county of Dumfries. There is no name given to it but the deed mentions that the sea is towards the north. From this it would seem to have formed the nucleus from which developed the larger estate of Craigston. The price paid to Robert Maxwell was £5642.10.3, of which £3062.0.3. was to be given to Robert Maxwell, the remainder being the redemption by John Urquhart of the mortgages due to John Maxwell and William Tod. The whole amount which was at 5% was redeemed when the balance was paid on 12 June 1772. It included the slaves

... Davy, York, Quamino, Cheney, Caesar, Jack, Ned, Coffee, Five-Fingers, Aesop, Syphax, Diana, Doll, Charlotte, Fanny, Mame, Teresia, Amoret, Cudjoe, George, Henry, John, Mol, Lydia, Lucy, Bab, Phyliss, Sylvia, Chloe, Rose, Peggy, Sarah and Flora, together with all the plans, household goods, utensils, implements, tools and effects in the schedule (which was attached to the deed) (appendix 2).

The inventory has, unfortunately, been considerably damaged by insect attack, but is given in full as it survives. Even in its decayed condition it does not suggest that a very high standard of living was enjoyed by Robert Maxwell. It is worth comparing it with the inventories taken 15 years later after the death of John Arbuthnot which show a much higher degree of comfort and elegance (appendix 3).

There was a further deed, or indenture, dated 1 January 1771, between the Maxwells and John Urquhart the purpose of which is largely obliterated. It refers to the same plantation and a further seven slaves, Tom, Lambah, Cuffy, Theresa and her child, Mary and Martha. In it Robert Maxwell releases his interest to John Maxwell for £500.

The rumour of this purchase had not reached William Urquhart when he wrote to his brother on 20 June 1770, two days before the deed was signed, suggesting that he saw a Dr Irvine, who was in mind to sell off his West Indian estate – there is no clue to which island this was on. From a further passage in the same letter it is clear that John Urquhart had also considered taking a public appointment, for his brother continues, ‘The person who had the Monserrat Collectorship was not to dispose of it, nor was it so good a place as thought at first’. This of course refers to the view that certain offices were regarded as a freehold and a sound investment, but in this case it would seem that the return on the investment would not have been worthwhile. It is a sad falling off nowadays that it should be considered shocking for the holder of any public office to make a profit out of it.

Although William Urquhart was some nine years older than his youngest brother, he clearly regarded him as a recipient of his confidence and a support in his financial affairs. In a letter written on 12 November 1771 which deals largely with money matters John is told that after all has been settled – that is to say after the monies advanced towards his purchase have been secured, ‘On your credit side will be only your patrimony of £666.13.4’ and the family arrangements were complicated by the middle brother, Jamie, who was in the army ‘... and unfit for any business’, and to this William adds a further warning to John concerning Jamie, ‘... Not to take him on, having no activity or application and would be a clogg...’. Clearly brother Jamie had the idea that a planter’s life would be a great deal easier and pleasanter than that of a soldier. He was in fact to end his career as a Major-General.

There is a long postscript to this letter:

P.S. John Urquhart, our father’s old faithful servant has an only son, a very promising boy (going 14) who I have hitherto taken charge of and Educate since they came here. I am now diffculted what to do wt. him. I thought of sending him over to you; if you cd. either give him Employment Yourself at first, or get him into any place, he is a very good Scholar writes an excellent hand, Accounts well, and is just now learning French, which I thought might be necessary to him in the West Indies. Do think of him and write me your opinion, I’d easily send him from Abern. and there are several ships going from that to Grenada every year. Neither of his parents have any Objection to the Boy’s going anywhere to push his bread, but they wd. particularly wish him to go to you.

This is the first mention of the William Urquhart who in later life was to become a land surveyor of considerable ability. Rising 14 in 1771 he would have been born in 1757/8, and was probably named after his patron, the Laird of Craigston. He seems to have been something of a

prodigy and to have received an extremely practical education. If today 13 seems a very young age to send a child half-way across the world to work it was not considered unusual then.

Only one letter, dated 23 September, contains much of interest for 1772. Brother Jamie's regiment had been ordered to St Vincent and the banking house of Arbuthnot and Guthrie had failed. This was of great concern to the brothers, as Robert Arbuthnot of Haddo-Ratray, the senior partner, was married to their eldest sister, Mary Urquhart. There was some degree of financial loss too, as part of the family money had been lodged with the bank.

John had clearly replied to his brother, advising against sending out young William Urquhart, either because he felt him to be too young or not sufficiently trained as William writes in the same letter

I shall keep William Urquhart two or three years longer at home as you direct as I know he could not answer for the servant you require at present.

Now that he was established as a planter John Urquhart was in need of help in the running of his new property. There is no mention of a manager or overseer being taken on when the estate was bought but it is difficult to see how John at the age of 22 and with no previous experience of plantation management could undertake this work without some experienced help. He was certainly in correspondence with his brother about this during 1772, because a letter from William, dated 3 February 1773, advises that Robert Reid had been sent out, his indentures having been drawn up by Provost Jopp.¹ In the same letter announcing Robert Reid's departure is a note of relief. Brother Jamie had acquired his Captaincy without purchase. The purchase price would no doubt have been a drain of William's funds and he was thankful not to be faced with it.

In a further letter written nine days later, which probably reached Carriacou at the same time and must have been intensely irritating to John, William writes

Andrew Moir had been qualifying himself for the management of a plantation, and had studied Arithmetic, Bookeeping, Mathematics and the surveying of land. I would not have engaged Reid.

There is no indication that Reid was unsatisfactory and he probably served his indentures, which would have been for five years – he had, however, been discharged some time before 1783.

In a letter dated 17 October 1773 the Laird of Craigston returns to the subject of young William Urquhart's future

William Urquhart is gone to Edinburgh to be in a Writer's Chambers, and to see if he can get into any business there; If he does not succeed I have still promised to send him out to you, and I am confident he would do well if he should go, he now goes on sixteen.

The same letter contains a cry from both William's heart and purse

Do take care of your health, when I read in your letter you had been taken ill of an inflammation of the liver it made me tremble for us all, so great a Dependance I have on you.

Clearly more had been put into the West Indian property than John's own inheritance. Exactly how much becomes apparent in later papers and the income derived from the plantation and the capital sunk in it were of great importance to the well-being of the family generally.

In William's letter of 20 May 1774 is an indication of the spreading effects of the West Indian connection on the economy of Scotland – in this case in the north-east

I shall refer you to his letter [Byth's] . . . regarding the Osnaburghs² and the consignment of this parcel which we imagine you can be at no loss to Dispose of either for the use of your own or Neighbours' Negroes.

James Urquhart of Byth, a cousin of William and John, whose son Adam had married their sister,

Elizabeth, had founded the manufacturing village of New Byth on his estates in King Edward Parish in 1764. The intention was to manufacture linen cloth, and he was experimenting with the weaving of Osnaburgh, a coarse material much used for slaves' garments. William remarked that, 'this was a trial of manufactory at home which could be abandoned if it did not take.' It did not – a letter of the 5 May in the following year notes that 'Byth's manufactory to be given up', and the *Statistical Account* of 1792–3 records that:

A house formerly intended as a linen manufactory, and for some time used as such, distant from the parish church 20 miles, was last year converted into a chapel of ease for the accommodation of the people at Byth.

The year 1775 was of considerable importance both to the family and to the plantation. News came in February that brother Jamie's affairs seemed to have taken a turn. His regiment had been transferred to Boston – these were the years of the American Rebellion – where he had met and married a Miss Flucker with a portion of £500. William, however, commented caustically, 'I hope his wife will make him a better economist, for I never knew a worse one.'

But for a time the soldier-brother's troubles were over: he had a wife with some money, he had acquired his Company without purchase, and he was appointed Town Major of Boston.

New names figure in the correspondence: the partnership of Williamson and Thornton, of Georgetown, Grenada are introduced. This firm was to act as agent for the Urquharts for a number of years with Edmund Thornton generally handling the family's affairs. He is described as an Attorney but this term does not necessarily mean Attorney-at-Law, but rather one who has the power to manage through the power-of-attorney for an estate owner. Trollope noted the use of the word in this sense in Jamaica when he was there in 1859.

This was also the year in which John began to increase the size of his holdings on the island. In the same letter of 1 February 1775 which contains the news of Jamie's wedding and introduces Williamson and Thornton, William says, 'I am very happy you are increasing your plantations.' With the letter written so early in the year in reply to one from Carriacou it seems that John Urquhart must have been considering this during the latter part of 1774 at least. There is no mention of what he intended. The enlargement of the plantations may have referred to additions made to *Craigston* which was to increase from the original 120 acres of 1770 to 317 acres by 1783 but it may also refer to an intended purchase of a separate plantation – the one which was later to become known as *Meldrum*.

On 3 February 1769 Robert Glassford, merchant of Grenada, but then residing in Glasgow, mortgaged his plantation to Messrs Cross, Bogle and Baird for the sums of £4766.13.4 and £833.6.7. This indenture, which also contains an affidavit from John Shields, clerk to Baird, Cross and Co of Glasgow, is very fragmentary and the plantation is not named; neither is its location identified. However, in an indenture of 12 September 1775 which is in a less fragmentary condition it is possible to be certain of the estate. This deed was drawn up between John Porteous, the Deputy Provost Marshall of Grenada and the Grenadines, and the four assignees of the estate of Robert Bogle, elder, and the trustee and factor of the sequestered estate of John Baird, late of Glasgow. The assignees, John Cross of Glasgow, John Hydeman, Thomas Bell and Joseph Standfield – all of London – and the trustee, John Clerk, obtained a judgement against John Glassford, the heir of Robert Glassford at the suit of John Cross, Robert Bogle, elder, and John Baird for the sum of £7251.5.9 at 165% making a total of £11 965.18.5½ in the money of Grenada. This was to be levied

upon that plantation, piece or parcel of land on Carriacou Abutting and bounded to the East by the lands of . . . Murvia, to the West by the lands of . . . Brown, to the North by the lands of Joseph de Saint Hillaire, and to the South by the lands of the said . . . Brown.

There was only one plantation on the island bounded on four sides by other properties, of which that on the north was the property of the St Hillaire family, and that was the one later to be known as *Meldrum*.

The judgement was also to be levied on

all buildings and outhouses and thirty three Negroes and other slaves named as follows, that is to say:

Alexis, Sampson, Scipio, Pope, Leo, Charles, London, Telemaque, Jean, Celeste, Marianne, Magdalene, Matton, Mary, Flora, Bridget, Polly, Hannah, Pellagie, Louis, Louison, Rose, Margaret, Jacob, Tom, George, . . . , Hector, Peggy, Hester, Kate, Louisa, and Sylvester, . . . the future issue progeny of the S . . . of the said Slaves. Also their Cattle Stock.

.....
Possession was taken 12 October 1775 by the aforementioned except for nine named negroes – Jacob, Tom, George, Hector, Peggy, Hester, Kate, Louisa and an Infant.

Witnesses: John Urquhart
Robert Murray

Note. 17 January 1776:

The negroe Jacob ran away some years before Robert Glassford's death and had never been heard of so it is supposed he is dead. Of the Negroes Charles is omitted to be excepted in the above he being one of the negroes mortgaged by Robert Glassford.

This document which is the first to show the Urquhart connection with the plantation suggests that by acting as witness John Urquhart had already an interest in the future of this property. He may have been influenced by letters from his cousin William Urquhart a younger son of the Laird of Meldrum; William was five years younger than John. William of Craigston had known of these letters as on 5 September 1775 writing to John he remarks, 'I had forgot to mention that Mr William Urquhart, Meldrum's son, told me that he had lately written to you about his going out to the West Indies.'

The appearance of this third William Urquhart does not make for easier understanding of the family affairs and for some time there was further confusion caused by the time it took for letters to pass between Carriacou and Aberdeen.

William of Meldrum cannot have arrived in the West Indies before late January or early in February 1776 as William of Craigston was writing on 19 November 1775 that he had heard that, 'William Urquhart was thinking of going out to the West Indies to mend his own fortunes.' As he was a younger son it would have been perhaps fairer to say *make* rather than *mend*. He was only 21 and probably, wishing to venture whatever small inheritance he had, felt that he could do no better than to join his fortunes to those of his planter nephew. William of Craigston certainly had misgivings; possibly John was not as open with his elder brother as he might have been. Certainly the sequence of events suggests this.

A letter received at Craigston – the date on the transcript is 17 September 1776, although it is not clear whether this refers to the date it was written or received – makes it clear that the cousins were considering selling the plantation on Carriacou and purchasing jointly on one of the older and more settled islands where there would be a greater degree of protection from the threat of a French or Spanish descent. In fact the two cousins had already taken a decisive step for on 13 September John Cross and his partners had conveyed, through the house of Williamson and Thornton, the mortgage on Bellvue to Messieurs Urquhart. The sum involved was £5176.10.0. The transaction involved 32 Negroes

Alexis, Hector, Sampson, Iaco, Leo, George London, Scipio, Charles, Thomas, Telemaque,

Jack, John, Lewis, Louison, Sylvester, Noelle, Celeste, Mary-Anne, Magdalene, Matton, Flora, Mary, Bridget, Esther, Catherine, Polly, Peggy, Pelagie, Louisa, Rose Margaret.

In the year between these two deeds although the total number of slaves remained the same, 32, three names have changed. Pope, Hannah and Jacob who were named in 1775 have been replaced in 1776 by Iaco, Jack and Noelle, whilst the spelling of many of the other names has been anglicized in the second document.

The news of this transaction clearly did not please William of Craigston as in his letter of 19 October 1776 he advised his brother against making so large a purchase, or letting William Urquhart do the same, and he added

You are the single instance I know of any young Gentleman from this Corner who has yet kept prudently within proper Bounds. Many have been led beyond their depth by over purchasing. Let this be a warning to you and content yourself with making the most of the plantation you have.

and this was repeated in a letter written a month later, together with a caution against the association with William Urquhart.

None of this seems to have had any influence with John Urquhart, who continued to increase his activities, as the following year he was leasing land, known as *L'Ance Monnaux*, which adjoined his own from Joseph de St Hillaire. This is noted as containing 25 quarries of land, French measure. It is hardly surprising that William Urquhart was concerned. However prosperous John was becoming he was certainly underwritten by his elder brother to a considerable extent. How considerable is shown by the memorandum on this packet of letters, to the effect that on 29 October 1777 John's indebtedness to his brother amounted to £10 251.0.5 which was only £600 less than the value of both plantations.

By 1777 the partnership of John and William Urquhart of Carriacou was recognized and John had sufficient trust in his cousin to leave him in charge of the plantations and come home himself for the first time since settling in the West Indies. He returned, sailing from Portsmouth in March 1778. His safe return is noted in a letter from Craigston dated 1 September which also refers to the 'Extraordinary expense you was put to last year in coming home, besides your new house etc.' Clearly the plantations were paying well for John to be able to replace the old Maxwell house on *Craigston* by a new great house. And in November William Urquhart was to receive the second instalment on the *Bellevue* or *Meldrum* estate drawn on his brother and cousin, the amount being £1300.

By now the economy of the plantations was increasingly affected by the quickening pace of the industrial revolution at home and by the demand for high quality cotton for the expanding mills both in Scotland and England; in writing to his brother on 25 November 1778 William touches on this . . .

George Robinson the Manufacturer at Banff came out for a night here. You know he is concerned with his father and Co. at Nottingham in a Thread and Cotton Manufactory, the cotton one is going on well, and one of the greatest in England . . . he had heard the Carriacou cotton was of the finest quality . . . he would propose to purchase some . . . Richard Arkwright, Cromfort near Derby, purchased for them at Liverpool.³

This is the first suggestion that any part of the cotton crop was being sent to an English port.

The next two letters contain matters of family interest. A nephew, Robert Arbuthnott, had been granted a lieutenancy in Lord MacLeod's 2nd Btn, 73rd Regiment, and had raised his quota of men ' . . . I think him an uncommon fine young man, and well calculated to pass through the world'. Robert was to be drowned in a ship which foundered off Cadiz in 1809. The regiment in

which Robert was to serve had been raised by Major-General John MacKenzie, Lord MacLeod, as the 73rd Regiment of Foot. After the American Rebellion it was renumbered as the 71st Regiment. This number had originally been carried by Simon Fraser's Regiment of Highlanders, raised after Culloden, but when their regiment was disbanded after the rebellion MacLeod's Regiment took its number. In its turn the 71st was to disappear, joining with the 74th in 1881 to form the 1st Btn, The Highland Light Infantry.

In a letter of 8 February 1779 John was to learn that brother Jamie's marriage had failed '... James and his wife are separated – she is not the least to blame' and in a letter written four days later he was receiving an enquiry about the manager of a neighbouring plantation which had been left by her son to a Mrs Brown of Forres. This would have been the small property to the W of *Meldrum*.

The next letter from William Craigston to the island is dated 12 May 1780 'Heard from you on 20 January, the only one since the taking of the island.' The French had occupied the islands in the previous year. There was little resistance and this was hardly surprising. It amused the War Office to send out a few thousand men to rot for years in the West Indies. When 5000 French attacked Grenada in 1779 it was found that out of a garrison of five companies of the 48th only 90 were in a fit condition to bear arms.

Clearly the occupation was playing havoc with the mails. It also had the remarkable effect of galvanizing the government into action; not to placate an outraged national honour by the swift recovery of the captured islands but rather to pacify the infuriated sugar and cotton interests whose cargoes and fortunes were now at risk. On 30 June 1780 William was able to write to his brother telling him of the passing of the Grenada Bill. This bill was designed to allow the produce of that island and the Grenadines to be exported to neutral ports in neutral ships without being taken by English cruisers.

William of Craigston's forebodings about his young cousin, William of *Meldrum*, had been realized. Either plantation life had not been to his taste, or his extravagances had been more than his elder cousins were prepared to support, and in 1781 it was learned in Aberdeen that the partnership had broken up, although when writing to his brother on 14 March, William was ignorant of the terms

No mention in what manner William Urquhart and you have parted, if you have paid him mostly off or if He still has a share with you in the joint plantation.

With William's next letter from Craigston on 19 June 1782 the second chapter in the story opens. After giving the latest news of William Urquhart, who had been appointed to an Ensigny in the 14th Regiment of Foot⁴ on General Mathew's recommendation he continues

Mrs Arbuthnot and I have had many conversations about her son Willie's going out to you, and she desires me to write to you about it; she says with her usual good sense and warmth that she does not want him to go so much on his own account as yours and mine in case of any accident befalling you . . . he is an exceedingly clever and well disposed lad as any I know and doing as well as could be wished in Sir William Forbes house in Edinburgh.⁵

On 17 August William was again concerned about the dissolved partnership

I observe that you wrote of your own and joint property with William Urquhart, Meldrum, I am sorry the latter has turned out so miserably ill.

He goes on to consider the advisability of advancing money against the property to purchase him up in the army. Having been with his regiment less than three months William Urquhart seems not to have found a foot regiment to his taste as in September there is a cryptic note that 'William Urquhart is going mounted again'.

The same letter – 9 September 1782 – contains a postscript which again shows how Carriacou was connected with the north-east

Mr Rose of Auchterless begged me to ask if his nephews, Alexander and Andrew Anderson, Managers upon Scott and Bogle's Estate were alive as their friends had not heard of them for two years.

Bogle, Scott and Co owned the plantation of *Mountraven* on Grenada, and Robert Bogle had been one of those from whom *Meldrum* had been acquired. The Bogle property on Carriacou was the estate immediately N of *Craigston*, later to be enlarged when it was joined to *Belvidere*.

The following year, 1783, saw the restoration of the islands to Great Britain under the terms of the Treaty of Paris. John Urquhart had been writing to his sister, Mrs Arbuthnot, and it was agreed that William, who had been 16 at Christmas the previous year should be sent out to his uncle. He sailed in May.

In a letter of 17 June 1783 William of Craigston returns to the subject of his other protégé

I wrote you in my last by William Arbuthnot that William Urquhart the Surveyor, our father's old servant John Urquhart's son wanted to know if you thought he could get any employment in the West Indies, besides him being a good Surveyor and good Drawer of Plans he is an exceedingly good hand at writing and is a good accomptant.

The same letter contained enquiries about another north-easterner who had left his home for Carriacou. Mr Moir of Scotstown was asking for news of

James Brand, a house carpenter said to have died 1776–77. His full sister in Aberdeen has heard he left effects to the value of £300 in the hands of a Mr Douglas.

1784 was to be the last full year of John Urquhart's life and the affairs of the dissolved partnership occupied the attention of both brothers. On 29 January William was advising that as William Urquhart was extravagant in his expenses he should not have more money advanced to him than the estate could repay, and in his letter of 21 February the reason for his concern is made clear: 'The bad harvests of the past two years have rendered the credit of our country gentlemen much more ticklish.' The years 1782 and 1783 had been years of dearth with an almost total failure of the harvest in north and east Aberdeenshire, leading to large arrears of rents. Consequently to those who had West Indian properties, as did William Urquhart, the returns from the plantations took on an increased importance, especially where the proprietor came to the aid of his tenants at home. It is recorded in the *Statistical Account* for the parish of King Edward in which parish the lands of Craigston lay that

It would be doing injustice to the principal proprietors of the parish, not to mention that they voluntarily shared the calamity of that, and the following year, by supplying the people with meal and grain at a reduced price, accepting bear-meal instead of oat-meal for part of their grain-rent, and a moderate conversion in money for what they could not afford to supply in kind.

Fortunately the exceptionally rich harvest of 1784 saved the north-east from complete disaster and eased the pressure on John Urquhart and the plantations. In the same letter John is told that, 'William Urquhart (John's son) does not think of going abroad anywhere as he is provided for under Lord Fife.'

On 11 March a deed was executed between John and his cousin William, who had left the 14th Regiment and was now a Lieutenant in His Majesties 30th Regiment of Foot,⁶ in which the latter released his moiety of the *Meldrum* estate. It refers to an earlier agreement of 1780 in which by

A deed in the French form whilst the Island was under the French Government William Urquhart made an absolute conveyance of his moiety in a deed signed before Gerard and L'Oreill—attornies, 23 May 1780 for £3,475 12s 0d together with 29 Slaves. The money was not payed and the deed indeed drawn without that intention as the parties intended coming to an agreement of accounts. After a further examination it was found that £2,478.8s.0d. was all due to be payed to William Urquhart, but should War break out before payment could be made the agreement would become Null and the estate be held jointly. The money was to be payed by bonds, the last one falling due 31 May 1791.

This came as a qualified relief to the elder brother who wrote on 4 August

You have agreed with William Urquhart for his part of the Joint Estate, the price payable to him by instalments at different terms. I hope in the end you shall be no loser; but this cursed Meldrum Estate has certainly been a great drawback to you.

It is pleasant to know from the same letter that William Arbuthnot seemed to be turning out well and was pleasing his uncle.

The letter sent out in October was by the hand of yet another north-east man – William Morrison – who, bred a surgeon in Banff, was on his way to Jamaica. This was one of the last letters between the brothers to survive. On 1 December William notes that John is laid up with gout and rheumatism, a combination that did not augur well for a man of only 34 years.

In September 1785 John was dead, although the news did not reach the family in Scotland until 17 November. The date of his death is not certain, but Edmund Thornton took an inventory of the two estates on 15 September so it had probably happened a few days previously. William was his brother's sole heir. This was a family arrangement to secure the value of the very large investment that William Urquhart had made through his brother in the West Indies. John died in debt to the tune of £16 937.14s.10¼d. which would have included the sum of £2978.8s.0d. due to his cousin for the purchase of his share of the Meldrum property. Of the remainder, £10 251 was his original debt to William, and £5937 was the purchase price of Meldrum. As Mr Thornton reckoned the two plantations with buildings, slaves, stock and furniture to be worth at a moderate valuation £18 000 sterling, or 2000 pounds currency the family fortunes were not impaired.

In a letter to Keith Urquhart of Meldrum on the first day of 1786, William Urquhart wrote of his brother

. . . He has indeed left me the greatest proof of his confidence and attachment to me by making me his sole Heir and executor, which I make no doubt will turn out very advantageous to me and my family, but as I knew before he intended me much aid had he lived no patrimonial advantage can make up for the affecting loss I have sustained . . .

There were three annuities however which were a charge on the estate; Mrs Arbuthnot was to receive £100 a year for life, and her two daughters were each to have £50 a year until they married.

There is also a curious item concerning John Urquhart's affairs related later by his nephew. In 1789 William was in Grenada to see the daughter of a Mr W Williams. John was supposed to have been acting as her trustee but on his death it transpired that he was in fact heir to the Williams estate, as it could not be left to a mulatto. It is hoped that the spirit rather than the letter of this disposition was followed. The settlement was clearly devised to protect the unfortunate Miss Williams, but had John died heavily in debt his creditors could, with perfect legality have seized the property.

The intention was that William Arbuthnot should continue running the plantations with some guidance from Mr Thornton. For a time all was well; writing home with the news of John's death the attorney had referred to William as 'a promising youth', but this good opinion was not

to last, and neither William's uncle nor his mother could have received much comfort from Mr Thornton's letter of 6 July 1786

Tho' I have all along given you the most favourable account of William Arbuthnot I now find it necessary to move him from the direction of the Estate – and he will come home in a ship of mine to Liverpool . . . You will be surprised at this sudden change, at the same time neither you nor Mrs Arbuthnot have the least occasion to be alarmed that her son has behaved improperly, the fact is I find William too young and giddy to have the direction of so large a concern . . .

William was only 19 and had suddenly succeeded to the management of one of the largest combined properties on the island. It was hardly surprising that his head had been turned. But there seem to have been other reasons. Mr Thornton hints at an unsuitable entanglement on the neighbouring plantation of *Beau-Sejour*. This was clearly of a sentimental nature though whether with a beautiful wife, daughter or mulatto favourite of Mr Grant will never be known. This interest was still alive 26 years later.

No doubt it was a chastened William who sailed for home on 27 July, arriving at Liverpool on 31 August. For a time Mr Thornton must have been relieved that he could manage the properties in a business-like manner and put in hand such necessary improvements as the new cistern at *Craigston*, where some repairs were also necessary to the house, and to plan the new cotton house at *Meldrum* – he had commented on the ruinous condition of the buildings on that estate in his letter of 20 October. He had, however, not reckoned on William's ability to charm his family and on 12 January 1787 he wrote to Craigston to say that he was sorry to hear William was coming out again. As William was to arrive later in the same month he had probably set out shortly after his uncle's letter containing this unwelcome news had been sent. Clearly it was intended he should be beyond recall before any of Mr Thornton's sound arguments could arrive to delay him. The attorney could hardly have derived much comfort from the knowledge that in a crisis he could 'admonish' the young man.

William was back on Carriacou at the end of January and on the 20th wrote to his uncle with news of the work that had been done

There have been some alterations made in the house by Mr Thornton – likewise a stable built and a cistern almost dug out . . . I informed Mr Thornton of your intention of sending out Mr Urquhart which I am very happy at and I hope as soon as you receive this letter he will think of sailing.

This piece of information gave little pleasure to Mr Thornton who probably thought that one giddy young man was enough without another untrained pair of hands, and a pair that was to be paid more than the indentured servants, on the properties. It certainly provoked an unusually testy passage in his letter of 4 April

Mr Reid has been discharged long ago, but I do not see the necessity of sending out this young man. The two indented servants under Mr Arbuthnot are fully adequate to what is necessary to be done in overlooking the cultivation of the Estates.

From now on the correspondence was in the hands of William Arbuthnot, and on 20 April he was informing his uncle that the lateness of the crop had enabled the slaves 'to collect so great a quantity of stones that the cistern was nearly compleated'. In his letter of 1 August William refers to the impending arrival of William Urquhart and to his uncle's letter 'of 25 May with duplicate of 23 March'. It was the custom to send a duplicate copy of the previous letter, a cumbersome, time-consuming and expensive but necessary precaution against the uncertain state of the mails. William Urquhart arrived at Carriacou on 15 September and was soon at work,

although not in the way of plantation management. It was his skill as a drawer of plans that was in requisition. Writing to his uncle on 24 September 1787 William Arbuthnot says

Inclosed I send you a sketch of a rail for the Stairs which Mr Urquhart made out. Your House stands much in need of a couple of them – one for each end. The two which your Brother put were of wood and are now so rotten that when a person leans upon them he is in danger of falling. I imagine the Expense of them would not be too much and it would be a great improvement to the house which is so excellent a one that I think everything about it ought to be in good repair. Mr John Campbell would be able to get them for you from Carron⁷ in case you chuse to send them out. I am in hope of being able to get Mr Urquhart a Job in the Surveying way So shall write to Mr Campbell for a chain and a Theodolite and shall desire him to charge it to you, and Mr Urquhart and I can settle it here.

This is the first mention of the firm of John Campbell Sen and Co, one of the largest of the Glasgow West India merchants, with plantations on Grenada. The firm was to act as the Scottish agent for the *Craigston* and *Meldrum* estates for many years.

For the time being all seemed to be well, and William's letters suggest that he had a bottom of common sense. When writing to his uncle on 24 November 1787 to tell him that . . . 'The Carpenters are at last come to build the cotton House at Meldrum . . .' he adds

. . . I made application to the Commanding Officer of the Militia for a gun for the Battery on your estate . . . Mr Urquhart was a little indisposed but he is now quite well – He is a very agreeable companion to me and I hope likes his situation.

There are still cannon rusting on the battery at *Craigston*.

Although from the correspondence it is clear that William Urquhart had come out to see how he could advance himself by surveying it was also intended that he should train as a plantation manager and assistant to William Arbuthnot and from May 1788, on the completion of the new Cotton House, he was able to live at *Meldrum*, with a salary of £60, which was £40 less than that of William Arbuthnot, but three times that paid to Mr Laurie, the indentured servant. He was not to remain at *Meldrum* for long – less than a year in fact – as on 6 March 1789 William was to write to his uncle, 'I have not heard from Mr Urquhart since I last wrote you but I have no doubt he has enough to do where he is – I have engaged a man to live at Meldrum'. William seems not to have remembered this as on 31 July he wrote: 'I believe I mentioned to you that after William Urquhart had left me I engaged an overseer for Meldrum'. Although he does not say who this was it may have been William Robertson who was eventually to become manager of both estates.

William Urquhart the soldier makes a brief appearance again in 1789 when William Arbuthnot learns that he has at last got a Company. This carried promotion with it as in Thornton and Co's Account for 1790 it is recorded that payments of £150 and £16.10s were made to Captain William Urquhart.

William was to die in Ireland eight years later in 1798, the year of the great rebellion. Having taken exception to some remarks passed by the Inspecting Office on the standard of the men he had recruited for the Banffshire Fencibles he threw himself down the waterfall at Ballyshanon.

By 1790 William Arbuthnot had been long enough in the West Indies to be wishing to have a plantation of his own and Thomas Campbell had written to Craigston with information that William and Dr John Bell had sought the assistance of their house in the purchase of an estate on Carriacou. This estate – *Prospect* – lay between Craigston and Dr Bell's property, and could therefore be managed without any great difficulty. That this purchase was affected is clear as on the c 1793 map *Prospect* is shown as being the property of William Urquhart (illus 3).

This, however, does not seem to have satisfied William Arbuthnot's ambitions, and two letters of 1793, 15 July and 12 August, show that he had been contemplating, in partnership with Dr Bartlett, making a further purchase. The estate that they had in mind was *Beau-Sejour*, the property of Mr Grant. This came to nothing for the two same letters contained more important news, that of the failure of the house of John Campbell Senr and Co. The firm recovered for it was still acting for John Urquhart in 1815, but for a time at least there was considerable embarrassment, especially for William Arbuthnot. The house had stopped payment late in April, and the bill drawn by William on them for the 'last instalment on my own place' fell due on 5th May.

William Arbuthnot's view of the failure was that

It is I fear but too true that their misfortunes have been occasioned from Mr Thos. Campbell's insatiable desire to get consignments, and that in consequence of that giving certain persons a credit on the House at home to a much greater extent than was proper.

Not only had William suffered from the failure but Craigston also had been put to great inconvenience since he had had a large sum of money in their hands. To add to the difficulties there were considerable expenses incurred on the plantations; a new Cotton House or Store built at the Bay, the purchase of 10 new negroes—one of whom had leprosy and was sent back to St Vincent—and the expense of provisions due to an almost total failure of the corn crop, some estates only producing a fortnight's supply.

This cannot have been pleasant news to his uncle, who had already made arrangements for William's disputed bill to be covered, and he must have been made equally uneasy by his nephew's views on the problems of shipping the cotton

and indeed there is now so little temptation to send cotton to Europe that I am as well pleased to have them here without the expense of storage. Should a good price offer early next year for cotton in this country I may be induced to accept it and send you Bills for the amount. . . . Since our shameful expedition to Martinique of which you will before now have received Accounts we have been much plagued by privateers—two or three vessels have been taken within sight of Carriacou, among which is the Packet which goes between the island and Grenada. I do not think however they will venture to land here. We are prepared to receive them.

Clearly the shipping of the cotton crop, except by ships in convoy, was becoming an uncertain venture and it was probably as much due to the actions of privateers as to the irregularities in the post office in Turriff, of which William complained, that letters from Scotland had so frequently failed to arrive that year. Nevertheless, he was preparing to ship 29 bales of cotton weighing 8268 lb, on the *Herbert*, a ship belonging to Mr Campbell. This was slightly under half the crop; 33 bales could not be accommodated on board, and were being kept in store at Carriacou.

In these two letters William expressed his hopes, if peace had returned by 1794, of coming home, but this was also dependent on his uncle's consent and to his being able to draw on Craigston for funds. After this William Arbuthnot ceases to figure in the plantation papers. When he left is not certain, but by 1804 he was no longer in the West Indies. His final return to Scotland was probably connected with the death of his two elder brothers, Robert who was lost off Cadiz in 1809, and John, who had died at Curacoa in 1796. It may too have been brought about by the death of his uncle, William Urquhart, in 1796, who was succeeded by his son John. In all likelihood John preferred to deal with an employee, thus putting things on a proper business footing, rather than with a member of the family. In any case William was now rising 30 and may well have felt that if he were to reach his allotted span he was more likely to do so in a healthier climate.

With William Robertson it is possible from his letters to put together a much more informative picture of the management and economic life of the plantations, for his letters to John Urquhart are concerned largely with these matters, whereas family affairs had bulked largely in the correspondence of his predecessors. His letters also contain more of public affairs where they touch on the West Indian trade: his views are well-judged within the context of his time. He appears to have been an educated man, and one whose humanity was not completely destroyed by the prevailing *mores* of a society based on slavery.

The flow of men from Scotland to the island continued and in a letter of 10 January 1804 he records the arrival of James Cruikshank, the new indentured servant, who was to stay on the plantations for the next seven years. In the same letter he also notes that the insurance premium on shipping cotton was now £5 per cent, which, considering the normal peace time hazards of the Atlantic passage leave alone the added risks from war, seems low.

After 36 years of apparent peace and prosperity on the Islands, for the French occupation of 1779–80 and the fighting in the 1790s hardly seemed to shatter the calm, there was to be an incident that must have shocked the nerves of the white inhabitants of Carriacou and no doubt disturbed the tranquillity of the family in Aberdeenshire, when a letter arrived at Craigston late in May or early in July 1806. Although, apart from minor outbreaks, the British West Indies had been largely free from the dangers of a revolt of the slaves – there had been trouble on Grenada in 1795 – this was not true of the rest of the Caribbean.

Ever since 1791, when the revolt of the slaves had reduced France's richest colony, Saint-Domingue, to a smoking desert, the eyes of the British planters had been anxiously fixed on events there. The need to combat Napoleon's plans to retake the island had led to an uneasy and equivocal support for the emergent black nation: a policy which found little support from our colonists, living as they did surrounded, and hopelessly outnumbered, by a large and volatile slave population. This policy was to cost the lives of thousands of British soldiers. The French had finally surrendered to Jean-Jaques Dessalines⁸ in November 1803 and their forces left the island. The rebellion and war had been conducted with atrocious savagery by both sides and the peace was to be consummated by an equally appalling act. In February 1804 Dessalines was to begin the massacre of all the remaining French colonists left on the island. The slaughter went on throughout the month of March regardless of age or sex. How many perished will never be known. The effect on the minds of the white inhabitants of the other islands in the Caribbean must have been to harden them against any manifestation of independence or resentment on the part of the negroes. In this light the events that happened on Carriacou, and the manner in which they were handled must be judged.

What John Urquhart made of them when he read the following letter is not recorded

Carriacou

Sir!

I cannot claim the honor of an acquaintance with you, but the occasion of this address will, I presume, afford a sufficient apology for my intrusion, and give me leave therefore to introduce myself to you as the Rector of Carriacou, in which capacity I feel it my duty to disclose to you the following circumstances.

A considerable number of your Negroes came to my house on Thursday evening last, and requested me to accompany them on the following morning to the magistrates, into whose hands, they said, your attorney and chief overseer, Mr Robertson, had given them up. They were anxious to return to their duty, and solicited my mediation from a presumption that it might mitigate the Punishment to which they were devoted.

I enquired the cause of their delinquency. They replied that the sailors of a vessel which brought their stores, informed them that their Master had sent them a plentiful supply of little

necessaries, the most valuable part of which Mr R., instead of delivering to them, had ordered, after they had been landed, to be re-shipped to Grenada and sold; which they, the negroes, erroneously supposed was to be done for his own private emolument. They particularly mentioned Sheeting for Trowsers etc. but Mr R. declares that there is not any such article, and that such a thing has never been sent for the negroes during the whole time of his being upon the estate: and says that this account is a mere fabrication of either the sailors, or the negroes themselves, who it seems are impatient to procure his dismissal from the Estate. That he had no idea of any such disposals but that the Mate having been pressed⁹ no other person knew in what part of the vessel the goods alluded to had been deposited; but that as soon as they could be come at, they would be sent back from Grenada, and duly distributed.

The credulity of the Negroes being thus abused, they felt no little indignation at being defrauded, as they had been induced to believe, of those comforts which their Master's kindness had intended for them. They said they had cheerfully strained every nerve in their Master's service, and to be thus deprived of his Bounty, was a hardship which they could not sustain without the utmost distress. Yet they had endeavoured to suppress their chagrin till Mr R. the day before began to chastise one of them for a deficiency of labour. Such a relaxation was a natural consequence of the hand not being in unison with the heart. At this they could no longer restrain themselves, but vented their indignation, I am told, in terms which I do not go about to excuse, calling him 'Robber etc'. But it was a mere ebullition of Passion. 'There is a point' says a great Author, 'to which if human nature is depressed she will rise and assert her rights'. At this point these mistaken people imagined themselves to have arrived. In order to silence them Mr R. called in the Police. This step only exasperated them the more, and after they had vented the rest of their choler on those who came to apprehend them, they escaped to a neighbouring Thicket. The mildest consequences that could be expected from untutored minds driven to the brink of desperation.

Their Houses were then all broken open and searched, and, as I do not learn that a single cutlass or fire-arm was found in their possession, or seen upon them, I think I may safely assert that this tumult was not the effect of a preconceived plan, and that the negroes had no intention whatever to commit any act that would require the last exertions of the Law. Nothing either in the actors or their actions exhibited the least trace of design.

The fugitives were then pursued, and their spirits being exhausted by fatigue and a day's fasting, and Passion giving way to the small degree of reason, which in their degraded state they are capable of, they came, as I before observed to me at night, and, in the most submissive manner, requested that I would conduct them to the magistrates, and endeavour to procure some leniety for them. This, of course, I readily undertook, and flattered myself, that from the consideration of their having thus humbly surrendered themselves, from the allowance that ought to be made for youthful indiscretion, the eldest of them being not more than four and twenty, and particularly from their having been led into this error by people of a complexion in which negroes are taught to confide, from these circumstances I really expected some alleviation of their sentence, but it was a vain hope! The justices, *themselves of the offended party*, were alike indifferent to argument and intreaty. A jury was summoned composed of three Chief Overseers, two of whom were unfortunately of the party offended *directly* in their own *persons* and indirectly in the person of a *Brother Manager*. By these the defenceless culprits were tried, and sentenced by this court to as much whipping as their constitutions could bear: and I am not a little surprised to hear that if death should be the consequence of this punishment, the consciences nor judgements of neither justices nor jurors will be at all impugned. I must confess that *even when there is no combination of interests*, I think it almost impossible for the best and most dispassionate men to free themselves entirely from the prejudices of Habit and Situation. Is it in human nature? If not what a mockery of justice is such a jury or *such* an occasion?

A scene followed which I will not harrow up my feelings to describe at full length, though I cannot pass it over altogether in silence. I am sorry to say that I observed from my windows, sanguinary exultation in the looks and gestures of many to whom I had attributed a better heart. It was a Triumph. Whilst the lacerated flesh of the wretched sufferers was writhing under the agonizing lash, their 'inward man' was outraged by the malignity of Insult. One of the Constables was so bespattered with human gore, that he could not sit down to dinner, till he had shifted his clothes.

Mr Robertson appears to me to have been rather unfortunate than culpable in this sad affair, and I am persuaded he laments the consequences of it. The situation of a manager is indeed deplorable when he cannot convince the negroes under his direction of the propriety of his conduct by any other means than those which have been resorted to on this occasion. Had I known before, what Mr Robertson has just acquainted me of, that he has a discretionary power to dispose of superfluous stores, it would have saved your negroes many a murmur, by enabling me to account for some appearances which perplexed me: However I trust that no room will be left for such an idea ever again to occur to their minds, and that their cordial obedience, and a continuation of your prosperity, will be the happy result of better information.

I beg leave to subscribe myself, respectfully

Sir!

Your obedt.: hum,: Servt.

Wme: Nash.

April 24 1806.

NB!

You are no doubt aware that this communication will not be much commended by the parties concerned; and it may be, that my interference has not made the most pleasing impression on them already; but on such an occasion, Silence is Guilt. You have, therefore, my free permission to make what use you may think proper of this letter. I have sent a Copy of it for Mr Robertson's Inspection.

'Welcome, for Thee, fair Virtue all the past;
Welcome, for Thee, fair Virtue, e'en the last,'
Adieu!

There is a ring of truth in the Rector's letter, and also the cry of helplessness that must come from all men of goodwill when faced with the need to reconcile humanity, justice and the law in a situation that is morally unjust and already being overtaken by the changing outlook of society.

It seems extraordinary but it was not until a month later on 28 May 1806 that William Robertson felt the need to write his own account of what had happened. It is of course possible that he wrote by the same packet as the Rector, but if he did his letter has not survived, and the May letter is certainly not a copy. Even so this outbreak is not apparently of the first consequence.

He starts by acknowledging the arrival of the *Sister* at Carriacou with two bales of Negro clothing and six barrels of pork for the plantations. From this he goes on to record that the crop for 1805, which totalled 72 297 lb (187 bales from *Craigston* and 95 from *Meldrum*) had been shipped, and that the tax on slaves had been set at 3s 6d so that the 285 slaves on the two plantations had produced a tax liability of £49 17s 6d which had been paid. Only after these business affairs had been detailed did he continue

... I am now going to relate a very disagreeable piece of business, which took place on Craigston three days after the *Sister* left this [island] for St Georges. After serving the usual allowance of corn to the Negroes, I went to the Store where the Herrings were, to serve them out also, but no one Came for any.

On weighing the Ginned Cotton the next evening, few of them had done above half a days work, and on asking them the reason (all the Ginners, 26 in number, and all able Young fellows from 18 to 30 years of age) they broke out in a most violent manner, and said that the Sailors of the *Sister* told them that you had sent them out plenty of Beef this year, and that they would not eat herrings, and if only Six Barrels of Salt pork came out for two Plantations, I might send them back. That you had sent them all Chick Shirts and Sheeting Trowsers, and that I had better bring back the Ship, and get them landed for them or they would do no work. The rest of the Gang

were cleaning Cotton who kept quiet, but it was plain to see all were Concerned, as none would assist in putting the Ring Leaders into Confinement. This took place on the 22nd April.

The next morning they went but with much reluctance, and I plainly saw Strong measures must be resorted to, to bring them to a sense of their duty. I again attempted to get the most daring into confinement, but without effect, and from the Seditious and Mutinous State they were in, and from the Violent expressions they made use of, I judged it prudent to call Messrs Scott and McInnes, two Justices of the Peace, to hear what they had to complain of.

Upon their interrogating them, all they had to say was 'that the Sailors had told them that their master was a Rich man in England, and he had sent them plenty of Beef, Chick Shirts, and Sheeting Trowsers, and that I had sent them down to Grenada to be sold, and that if they were not brought back they would do for me'. They refused going into Confinement, made use of very improper language to these Gentlemen, and in a manner bad defiance to the white people of the Island.

23 April. None of the 26 could be got hold of this day.

24 April. Mr Scott who commands the Militia called a Company out, and only 8 could be got hold of.

25 April. In the morning the 18 Negroes out had gone to a neighbouring Estate, Prospect, and invited the Negroe men there to Join them, but when they found they would not do this they went to the Rev. Mr Nash, and told their Complaints to him, and requested him to Carry them to Town, as they were Sensible they had behaved very ill, but they still believed what the Sailors had told them regarding the Beef etc., and hoped Mr Nash would see it brought to them.

They were all lodged in Goal, fortunately without any of them being hurt, tryed that day by a regular Court and punished. 18 the Justices sent out to the Estate, and 8 of the Ringleaders are still in Confinement. Their names are Coffee, William, Sam, Sandy, Robin, Quammy, Cobina and George. All Young, Strong people, but, I am sorry to say, horrid bad dispositions, and your property would be well cleared of them, or at least five of them, Sam, Sandy, Robin, Cobina and George, if they could be disposed of.

Everything is now going on as usual, only we lose the Labour of the eight now in Goal, and 3 people Cooking and keeping them clean and guarding them. This business has given me much uneasiness. It is however fortunate no lives were lost; my mind was in much anxiety about the Cotton house and other buildings from the threats they made use of . . .

The two accounts agree as to the facts of what took place but differ in the gloss that they put on them. Mr Nash paints a picture of simple, kindly folk tried beyond bearing and brutally treated far beyond their deserts. Mr Robertson's view is that a group of ungrateful slaves who, not knowing when they were well off, had raised a great deal of trouble, and that when persuasion had failed, a degree of force had been necessary, that those responsible had been punished, and thanks to firm action no further damage had been done. Two perfectly honest accounts from two honourable men, agreeing in all salient facts.

Mr Nash's account of the punishment of the ringleaders is clearly true both in what they suffered and the attitude of many of the white onlookers. A slave-flogging was degrading to all who took part in it, and nothing can have made it bearable to the sufferers. But there is another side to the picture. At the outset Mr Robertson relied on the forms of law and justice, and after failing to persuade the ringleaders to go into confinement peaceably sent for two Justices of the Peace to hear their complaints. The slaves' reaction to this was still to refuse to go into confinement, and to make use of very improper language. When force was eventually used 26 men were punished, eight of whom were kept in custody, where they were guarded, fed, and had their wounds dressed by three slaves sent in from the plantation. Cruel as the punishment no doubt was it was mild compared with the fate similar behaviour would have met on the French islands. A quick death would have been merciful compared with the punishments that French planters were known to inflict for far less serious faults than this on their slaves. Of the eight slaves lodged in gaol Robertson recommended that five should be sold away from the plantation.

His next letter of 20 June contains two matters of interest. The first was a bill of sale for John Urquhart to execute for a mulatto boy whom he had made a present of to George Mitchell. From the correspondence it seems that Mitchell was under-manager to William Robertson, and the boy was Mitchell's son. Although emancipation was an idea abhorrent to most of the white population a feeling was growing that slavery was wrong for those with a share of white blood. Because the children born to a female slave remained the property of her owner, the white father possessing no rights in his child at all, it was necessary for him either to buy or, as in this case, be given the freedom of his child. It certainly became William Robertson's policy to advise John Urquhart to follow this line wherever possible.

The letter goes on to deal with more important matters. The writer was

... Not certain when the ships now lying at St Georges may get away, as the Admiral has written word to detain them in Consequence of an 80 Gun Ship (on board of which Jerome Bonaparte is said to be) having arrived at Martinique, and reports that 7 sail more of the Line is daily expected ...¹⁰

By 29 June 1806 he had returned to the matters of the recent trouble on the plantations. The eight slaves who had been imprisoned had returned to work. William Robertson quite reasonably wished to have the five most culpable of them away from the estate. As they could not be dismissed they would have to be sold. His feelings towards Mr Nash were less than charitable, and he was very much hurt by the attitude of the slaves towards him. He wrote to his employer with this very much in mind. Nevertheless, he was a conscientious man, and did not allow his feelings to prevent him giving an account of the tally of slaves on the plantations

The 8 slaves I wrote you of being in Goal, are now Liberated and are working on the Estate, and everything now going on as usual. I request however you will send out a power of Attorney, and If you join me with any other person in this Island or Grenada, I shall do everything in my power for your Interest, but I cannot think of living among such an ungrateful and treacherous set of people as your Slaves have Shewn themselves to be to me, who I am conscious having done them every Justice which their Appearance will Shew. You have 5 very fine children born this year, and only 2 Superannuated people dead on Craigston, and 2 born and none dead on Meldrum.

I understand the Rev. Mr Nash has written to you on the Subject of the mutinous Slaves. I shall say nothing farther on this matter, than that he has made himself very busy with what he had nothing to do with and given me and others a good deal of trouble.

A point of interest emerges from the account of the slaves; seven children had been born, and only two old people had died which suggests two things, first that the plantations, if not the islands were reasonably healthy, and that the slaves were treated humanely – not that this in any way vindicates a system as repugnant to reason as it is to humanity.

In July William Robertson went over to Grenada from Carriacou with the purpose of clearing his character before his Excellency the Governor, and to testify before the Supreme Court which was investigating the behaviour of Mr Nash, who appears to have been most injudicious in some of his utterances. The Governor was well satisfied with Robertson's account of the matter

St Georges 6th July 1806

My last letter to you was dated 24th ult. and as it goes by the same Packet which this goes by, I have not sent you a copy of it.

In Consequence of Mr Nashes to you, a Copy of which he sent me, I came here a few days ago, to Clear up my Character to the Governor, and the Community at large, and have Convinced his Excellency, that what Mr Nash has written you is false with regard to any part of your Stores having been re-Shipped.

I got an affidavit from Captn. Barclay to the Contrary, and I requested of five Gentlemen in Carriacou to come to Craigston, where I shewed them the Invoices from *Messrs. Campbell and Coy.* and proved to them by the Certificates of George Mitchell and John Walker what had been delivered to the Negroes, and what was remaining on the Estates of these Stores, which of Course Corresponded with the Invoices.

I also got a Certificate from James Duncan, and James Reid, that they assisted in delivering the Stores received from Europe, and that they were ready to make oath that everything sent out by you was faithfully delivered to the negroes. His Excellency told me that I had cleared my Character to his satisfaction, and that Mr Nash had made himself very officious in an affair he had nothing to do with.

The Supreme Court of Judicature being Sitting, a Copy of Mr Nashes letter to you was shewn to the Grand Jury, who sent for me, and enquired very minutely into the whole business, and being Convinced from the Certificates and Affidavits produced that I had been wrongfully accused by the Negroes of Injust dealings towards them, and from affidavits Stating Expressions which Mr Nash has been heard to make regarding Liberty etc. they presented him as a dangerous person to remain in the Colony from his interfering between Master and Slave, and Creating Murmurs among them. As the Justices and Jury of Carriacou, that was on the tryal of your Slaves, intend prosecuting him, for the reflexion he throws out on their Character, The Solicitor General would not give me a Copy of the presentment.

Mr Nash says in the latter part of his letter to you, that, 'had I known before what Mr R. has just Informed me of, that he has a discretionary power to dispose of Superfluous Stores, It would have saved your negroes many a murmur by enabling me to Account for some Appearances which perplexed me'.

This plainly Shews he has been tampering with your negroes for a length of time, or how Could he have prevented their murmuring. I defy Mr Nash to prove any thing Contrary to the Strictest Integrity and honesty against me, and had you been present yourself since I had Charge of your Properties, I could not have been more Careful of everything belonging to you, than I have been. I am Conscious that I have always behaved with the greatest humanity and Care in Sickness and in health to Your people, and there are not a finer Gang of Negroes in the Government than yours is; and I shall have the satisfaction of delivering over your properties, to whom ever you may Appoint here in as good order as any in the Island. I shall say no more on this disagreeable subject untill I hear from you.

I sail for Carriacou in about an hour. I received a letter Yesterday from G Mitchell wherein he says there has been a fine rain since I left home, and everything going on as usual . . .

It seems a pity that the real authors of this uproar, the sailors from the *Sister*, could not have been apprehended and flogged.

The remainder of the letter deals with the delay in the sailing of the convoy of 120 sail then waiting at Grenada; a French force was reported at Martinique and thought to be sailing for Nevis and St Kitts. Admiral Cochrane¹¹ was in pursuit, but much mischief was feared. This gives some idea of the size of the great West India convoys, of which this was only a part.

When he wrote again on 9 September Robertson allowed the more mundane plantation affairs to occupy some of his letter. He was trying to achieve a better balance of labour between the two estates

. . . Your Slaves have thriven and increased so much at Craigston that I beg leave to recommend to you to send over a few families to Meldrum, say to the extent of 12 or 16 working Negroes, which this Estate can very well spare . . .

. . . I beg of you to write early, so as Comfortable houses may be got erected for them before the Crop begin . . .

He soon returns, however, to the problems raised by the recent troubles, and to some disquieting news both from Carriacou, and from some of the neighbouring islands, in which the unfortunate Rector appears, however innocently, to have had a hand

... Since I last wrote you, your Slaves have behaved well enough, and seem sorry for their late ill-behaviour. I fear however that the person who has written you a parcel of falsehoods, not only against me, but other respectable people of this Island, has been the principle cause of it.

I saw a letter a few days ago from Mr Stuart, Manager of Mr Tod's Estate of Dumfries, where there are about 352 Slaves, to Dr John MacLean, Dr Bartlett's Attorney and Manager here, Informing him as a Magistrate [of] the *Cant word* among these Slaves: they say 'St Domingo is a fine large Country, Inhabited by Blacks, where no white man dare shew his face that is hostile to them, AND WHAT THE PARSON says must be true.

In consequence of this, and other Information that the Slaves Intended to rise against us application was made to the governor and we got up the day before Yesterday Twenty Soldiers and a Plentiful Supply of ammunition.

I do not believe there is an Island in the West Indies where the Cultivators of the Soil live so comfortable as in this one; I have been nearly Sixteen years on this Estate, and I must say I never heard a murmur among the Slaves, until the person who pretends to be so much their friend came to reside in it.

An Insurrection which was to have taken place lately on Boqua and Mustique two Islands to windward of this was fortunately discovered, and 14 of the Ringleaders Secured. They were carried to St Vincent where they were try'd, and I understand part of them are sentenced to be whipped and banished.

The presentation of the Grand Jury which I wrote you of sometime ago, against Mr Nash is now published. To save postage I have enclosed a Newspaper to Mr Arbuthnot and requested him to send it to you on its Arrival. You will see his character there . . .

The next surviving letter, 10 November 1806, contains an account of the crops on the two plantations. Corn, which was the second crop and formed the staple diet of the slaves, had produced 2600 barrels on *Craigston* and 800 on *Meldrum*, which was 'a great sufficiency for your people for twelve months'. The cotton too was doing well provided the Chenille kept off.¹² He also gives the figures for the cotton crop for 1805. At 44 000 lb for *Craigston*, and 22 000 lb for *Meldrum* this is some 6000 lb less than the figure given in his letter of 20 May. There is no explanation for this discrepancy. He also adds that General Miranda was on the island on his way from Corvo to Barbados.¹³

By the time of this next letter, 9 December 1806, the news of the capture of Buenos Aires¹⁴ had reached Carriacou, and he hoped it would 'be attended by benefit to the Cotton Planter' by providing new markets. He again refers to General Miranda, who was being assisted by a British force. From the same letter of 9 December it appears that no word had reached William Robertson from John Urquhart as to the latter's reaction to Mr Nash's letter in April, which first brought the news of the disaffection amongst his slaves to *Craigston*. This is difficult to understand, for by then John Urquhart must have been able to form some opinion as to the conduct of his manager. That it was favourable is clear as Robertson was to continue in his service, but it argues a somewhat cold and cautious although not unkindly nature, unwilling to give any sign of support or approbation when it was most needed

... I shall be anxious however until I hear your Sentiments on Mr Nashes letter, and I hope you will get him to Explain to you 'the appearances which perplexed him'. Altho' a Native of Barbadoes (as I understand) he is, from his principles a very unfit Person to be in the Country, but I fear from his already being appointed Rector for this Island, it will be a difficult matter to get rid of him. His Character is now well known in the Colony, and I hope the Presentment of the Grand Jury (of which I hope you have seen a copy before now) will not only keep him quiet in future, but put people on their Guard in any other Colony he may go to. He is Completely despised by every white person on the Island; no one speaks to him, nor does any body go near his Church.

I have had a good deal of trouble with your Negroes since April last, which I am certain is owing to the bad advice they have got. They are however perfectly Sensible of their Error,

behaving well enough, but for an Example to the rest and to prevent anything of the like ever taking place again I am certainly of the opinion that 4 or 5 ought to be sold, and these are Sandy, Robin, George, Cobina and Sam, and I shall endeavour to get as good a price for them as possible . . .

This sale finally took place when the five were sold at £80 apiece to the Estate of Samuel Span on Trinidad. In a letter of 12 March 1807, Robertson writes that he will travel down with them to ensure that they are not ill-treated. He qualifies this humane intention by adding that it would also ensure that their value was not lessened. In a later letter he notes that these slaves were sold opportunely as a measure was introduced to prevent the sale of known trouble-makers off their own islands – a form of political quarantine. In the event Mr Span was reluctant to pay for his new slaves, and it was some time before John Urquhart received their price.

From the letter of 18 May 1807 it is apparent that news of the first victory of the Abolitionists had reached the island

. . . I am sorry to hear that the Slave Trade is to be abolished, but you will not suffer by it, as you have an Increase of Six this year on Craigston, which makes up for the five sold, and an old superannuated man (Sandy) dead.

For the moment the slave population was holding steady but the likelihood of a further increase in it would raise the question of what was to be done with the surplus numbers. So far none of the Urquhart slaves, apart from the five who went to Trinidad, had been sold. Abolition of the Slave Trade could well mean that slaves might not be sold off their own islands; a narrow legalistic interpretation could prevent their being sold off the plantation. Hardening opinion at home made this an unwelcome possibility, and many humane owners and managers must have wondered how this daunting prospect might be overcome. In the same letter more human matters arise. William Robertson acknowledges that in addition to the provision of salt pork he has received his yearly supply of cheese and porter. He had a complaint however: Mr Milne, the London agent, who sent out the annual medicine chest had failed to provide Glauber Salts, Jollop, Vinegar or Sweet Oil.¹⁵

The next letter, 9 June 1807, is of considerable interest. After recording a crop of 64 904 lb of cotton from both estates it continues

. . . You will see a charge of £64.11.6 Currency paid the Contractors of the Block House. This Building was suggested to the Governor in Febr'y. last as being a thing which the Inhabitants thought Necessary in case of any Internal Commotion, which he very much approved of, but the Legislature would allow nothing to defray the expense. A Calculation was made how much a Stone House of a Hexagon Shape 20 ft Diameter and 20 ft high, built of Stone 2 ft thick, with a Strong floor to bear a field piece or two, [would cost] which was found to be ½ a dollar of 4/6 currency for each Slave in the Island. A Subscription paper was made out and signed by every Individual on the Island who possess Slaves excepting NASH who absolutely refused altho' he has only 4 Slaves, and if he had never come to the Island, it is my real opinion such a thing would never have been required . . .

The late troubles had put the inhabitants of Carriacou in a considerable fright and the result was that they were prepared to spend a considerable sum of money on a perfectly useless building – useless that is for the purpose for which it was intended, which was to quell an 'Internal Commotion' – although it might have provided a last refuge for such of the white survivors as might reach it. In refusing to vote any money for it the Legislature clearly thought it an exercise of doubtful utility. Robertson was also concerned about the cost to the estates of goods sent out from Britain and he raised two points with his employer. The first was that it might be cheaper to provide salted ling¹⁶ for the slaves to eat rather than salted herring. The second was the wisdom

of obtaining the goods and stores needed on the plantations from two different agents, John Campbell Senr of Glasgow, and Alexander Milne of London. Might it not be cheaper to use one; possibly each house could be tried on alternate years. Nothing was to come of this suggestion. The news of the capture of Monte Video brings an expression of the hope that ‘This will retrieve from ruin those who sent goods to Beunos Ayres.’ Which of course it did not as the expedition turned out equally disastrously.

Robertson’s few letters from 1808 are concerned almost entirely with routine plantation affairs, and it is not until 1809 that matters of more general interest appear. On 4 May he writes to John Urquhart to tell him that two pipes of Madeira had been sent off to Scotland. Possibly this arrangement allowed the wine to enter the country at a reduced duty since it would have come in from a colonial port. And on 1 June he was able to write that the packet bringing the mail had made the crossing from Falmouth to Barbados in 19 days. This was clearly an unusually rapid passage, in contrast to the month taken by most merchantmen, and the six or seven weeks by the troopships.

In a letter dated 12 November 1809 he discusses both the crops and the freeing, or at least the giving or selling, of mulatto children to their white fathers. From the passage dealing with the crops it would seem that the letter is mis-dated and was probably written on 12 December.

The property looks at present as well as ever I saw it, and has made plenty of corn. We finished reaping the crop the beginning of December. Craigston has made 3200 Barrels in Straw and Meldrum 1200 Barrels which is a great sufficiency for a year. The Cotton on Craigston looks as well as could be wished for, but the crop will be late of beginning, on account of the uncommon quantity of rain we had the latter end of November and almost all of December which keeps the bushes full of vegetation. I hope however we will do better than last year, if we have good crop weather . . .

Both plantations grew two crops a year; corn in the summer and autumn to provide food for the slaves, and cotton in the spring. William Robertson’s hopes were not to be realized, the crop of 1810 was to be one of the worst ever remembered. The second part of the letter emphasizes one of the most tragic aspects of slavery, the condition of children born of mixed couplings

. . . Mary, a mulatto girl, and a daughter of Mr Mitchell’s, attached to Meldrum estate seems to feel much that her brother is made free and that she is left a slave; she is of little use on the property and if you will have the goodness to dispose of her, I will give you credit for what she may be appraised for, or put a female slave in her place. I have had also several applications from the fathers of Jean, Mary and Peggy, twins and children of Betsy (Mutess) and of William, a son of Bess, a mulatto at Meldrum. They are all infants and are too white to be ever of any use to the properties, or very little, and if you will have the goodness to dispose of them I shall take care that their full value is paid.

George Mitchell was the under-manager at the plantations and had bought his son into freedom in 1806. The price was probably nominal as William Robertson referred both to a bill of sale and to the boy being a gift. Now his sister was to be transferred to her father. From this one would suspect that they were children of the same mother. The fathers of the other children were probably also on the plantation staff. It is a curious side to Robertson’s character that when doing a kind act he always had to qualify it with a soundly practical reason. The babies would have been nearly white, and in the case of those of Betsy – a Mustee and not a Mutess (a slip of Robertson’s pen) – they would have shown little if any trace of negro blood.¹⁷

The following year started on a grateful note when he wrote on 28 February, acknowledging the arrival of his annual present ‘I return you my best thanks for the Porter and Cheese you had the goodness to send me . . .’ This had arrived, together with medicine and other stores from

England on the *Hind*. At the same time six barrels of salt beef for the slaves had arrived from Scotland on the *John Campbell*.

In April Robertson was preparing to ship the previous season's crop which was insured to sail either by the convoy, or in individual vessels, but the presence of a strong Fleet amongst the islands was threatening

We have accounts here of a French fleet of 10 Sail being at Sea, Supposed Coming for the relief of Guadeloupe, they are however too late, and If they make their appearance in these Seas, I hope Admiral Cochrane (who is Cruizing off that Island with 7 sail of the Line and Several Heavy Frigates) will give a good account of them . . .

On 18 April he wrote with further details of the shipping of the 1809 crop. Forty-six bales totalling 11 874 lb had been sent in convoy by the *John Campbell* and *Intrinsic*, and 12 513 lb had been sent separately by the *Eglintoun* and *Hind*. There were still 7600 lb left on the two plantations so the total crop had been 31 987 lb. This compares poorly with the 72 297 lb shipped in 1806, which was the 1805 crop. He then continues with a description of the weather which was generally bad

The weather Still continues very bad. Constant Cold and high Northerly winds, which is making the Cotton open quite hard and yellow and I fear very little more will be made, which I assure you I feel much for, but the Calamity is general throughout the Island, and among the Quays. It is a most fortunate circumstance that enough of Provisions has been made, or it would have been a Most Ruinous Year. The Sugar Islands have fallen also very much short of their Usual Quantity. Indeed I understand the failure of the Cropp will be general over the West Indies . . . James Cruickshank and all your people are well . . .

Writing on 5 May he warns of the prospect of a bad crop

. . . The cotton which we have picked for some time past is so hard, that it requires a great deal of labour, in beating with Sticks to get any of it to pass the mill.

This would have been bad enough, but the prospect of an amicable arrangement between the American and British governments raised the spectre of cheap imports from the southern states which would lower the price of cotton and he hopes that the English Parliament

will see the propriety and necessity for the prosperity of her Colonies to lay such a duty on American Cotton as to oblige them to put their land in some other cultivation.

By the time he wrote on 12 June it was clear that there had been an almost total failure of the crop. Not only had the growing season been one of appalling weather, but the picking had been made extremely difficult

This has been a most distressing and disagreeable Crop Season as I ever experienced, for during the whole of it we had not a good Crop day, and from 50 to 70 lbs of Gross Cotton that a Negro will pick with ease in a day, they seldom got above 20 lbs and often not 10 lbs, every Pod almost being drove off the Cotton by the high winds and heavy rain. I feel exceedingly for the failure of the Crop, and as there is every appearance of Peace with America I must fear it will not bring a good price . . .

. . . The rainy season commenced the 31st ult^r and I have all Craigston planted in Corn excepting 2 fields, and about 90 acres at Meldrum . . .

In light of the weather since the previous November the start of the rainy season must have been a point of largely academic interest.

Since William Robertson's letter of 11 December 1809 George Mitchell had died and this could well have ended any hopes his mulatto daughter might have had of winning her freedom. But John Urquhart had no intention of standing in the way of this and Robertson went on

... I communicated to the Mulattoe Girl Mary, daughter of the late Mr Mitchell, Your humanity and generosity to her, in giving her her freedom. She is overjoyed poor Creature, and begs I will send you her Blessing; and permit me to add mine for the friendship you have shown to the Memory of the Deceased.

I shall inform the Fathers of the other Children that I have now your permission to dispose of them ...

He also recorded that he had '... sold to Mr Duvivier for £9.18. Voltaire's works ... They were in French, some of the volumes wanting, and spoiling with Vermin ...' These were probably some of the books mentioned in the 1785 inventory of the contents of Craigston (appendix 3).

The slave population of the two plantations continued to increase, six old superannuated slaves having died and 10 healthy and thriving children being born. In this letter there is reference to a quarter cask of wine which had arrived without any instructions as to its disposal, but by the letter of 20 July its destination had been resolved and it had been delivered to Dr John MacLean, Dr Bartlett's Attorney, on *Dumfries* estate. The question of the price of cotton is raised on 3 December when Robertson fears it will be endangered by the flooding of the market with American cotton from Georgia. West Indian cotton was to be increasingly faced with competition from America as new land came under cultivation in the states of Georgia, Alabama and Mississippi.

On 5 December he records an account received from the firm of John Campbell Senr, for sending out Adam Reid, a new indentured trainee manager. He had sailed on the *Susannah* from Port Glasgow. His steerage passage cost £21.0.0 to which was added £1.16.0 for his sea bedding and board. The expense of getting from Aberdeen to Port Glasgow together with the carriage of his trunk had been a further £1.8.10. The same ship had brought out stores for the plantations to the value of £405.

The disposal of the children of mixed blood to their fathers seems to have become the settled policy on both estates as the letter of 20 June 1811 shows

... You have lost five negroes at Craigston and has eight fine thriving children born. George at Meldrum was diseased, and Bridget an old weakly woman; the young boy Dick is a loss but there is no preventing these things, there is a fine Young Child Charlie in his place ...

... You will see that I have sold the Quadroon Infant Charles, son of Betty (Mustee) to his father John Stewart; I communicated your goodness to the Fathers of the other Children but none of them has come forward; however the longer they are of being appraised, the more valuable they will be ...

This policy was in fact to be extended as on 5 August Robertson was writing to John Urquhart about a slave wishing to free herself

... I have had a very earnest request from Betty (Mustee) to purchase herself and some of her children, which if you consent to I will purchase Negroes and put in their place on Meldrum Estate, which will be much more benefit to you than they are, as they never do any field work ...

This may be the same person described in an earlier letter as 'Betsy (Mutess)' whose children, Jean, Mary and Peggy have already been mentioned. Some of the fathers had not come forward, and having already lost her son, Charlie, to his father, John Stewart, she seems determined to keep and, if possible, save the rest of her family. As her son is described as a quadroon Betty must in fact have been a mulatto. By describing her as a mustee Robertson may have been using the term to suggest that she was very light complexioned, otherwise her son could hardly have been described as a quadroon. In the same letter he explains that he has released James Cruickshank from the remainder of his indentured service

... A Vacancy from the Death of a Manager happened on the Prospect Estate some time ago, and James Cruickshank who only has a few months of his time left to serve, Requested I would give him up the rest of his time, which I have done, and which I trust will meet with your approbation, as it is but seldom vacancies occur which he could fill up . . .

... Adam Reid keeps his health very well and gives me every satisfaction . . .

After seven years service – he had arrived at Craigston in 1804 – James Cruickshank was offered the post of manager on the neighbouring plantation of *Prospect*, an estate in which there had been an earlier Urquhart interest.

On 28 February 1812 Robertson wrote concerning the shipping of the 1811 crop. Mr Campbell had been asked to insure 50 bails sailing by the *Susannah* without convoy, and Mr Milne to insure 70 bales sailing by the *Grenada* – it was the *Grenada* which had carried the balance of the 1809 crop. This total of 120 bales – about 31 000 lb – was similar to that of 1809. It was very much better than the 1812 crop. Robertson appears to have been thankful to harvest 19 000 lb on both estates in spite of the bad weather. From the amounts sent to Mr Campbell and Mr Milne it is clear that the English market was taking the larger share of the estates' produce.

Another rather more domestic item in this letter concerns a consignment of vinegar

I have sent home by the *Susannah* a Small Box, Containing Six Bottles of Pepper Vinegar, and Requested of *Messrs John Campbell Senr. and Co.* to forward it to you by the Aberdeen Carrier. When the present vinegar is drawn off and fresh Vinegar added it will be soon as Strong as the first. A little salt should also be put in the bottles . . . Adam Reid and all your people are well.

Unfortunately no mention is made of what sort of pepper was used. This particular receipt for making spiced vinegar survives to this day in some houses in Aberdeenshire where the writer learned it, although the vinegar is no longer sent to the West Indies; the spices are applied at home. There is a cryptic reference in the letter of 20 May to 'Mr Arbuthnot's interest in Beausejor' without giving any clue as to what that interest may be. Whatever it was that caused Mr Thornton so much uneasiness in 1786, it was still remembered 26 years later.

Other documents, principally accounts, have been discovered in the Craigston papers that deal with the later history of the two plantations, and these throw some light on the problems facing plantation owners and managers after emancipation.

By now *Craigston* and *Meldrum* were sugar plantations producing both raw sugar and molasses. In a letter of 15 December 1839 [accompanying the accounts for October], Mr Daniel Polson, the manager, complained of the depressed state of the sugar market. This was largely due to the competition of slave-produced sugar from Cuba and Louisiana but was also increased by the problems of free labour. This is made clear when he writes

Some of the Labourers who left are returning but if to remain permanently or to spend the holiday I cannot say at present. The people are suffering from cold and fever at present but very few attend the hospital . . .

The accounts sent with this letter give a clear picture of the labour conditions on the two plantations at the height of the planting season, with extra labour being engaged for ploughing and digging. The bill for labour for the two plantations came to £168.1.1. The numbers employed varied daily but the highest figure recorded was on 26–28 October when 99 people were working at *Craigston*, and 43 at *Meldrum*. The work force was divided into seven categories, Head People; 1st, 2nd, and 3rd class field workers, Watchmen, Tradesmen, and Domestic. Head People were paid 1s 3d to 1s 6d a day as were the 1st class field workers and domestics. The 2nd class field workers received 9d and the 3rd class 6d. One Watchman was paid 1s 3d, the other 9d. No figure is given for tradesmen who were presumably paid piece-work rates. There were two head people on each plantation, and just over half of those employed were paid as 1st class field workers.

Writing from London on 24 January 1840 in connection with these accounts, George MacLean tells William Urquhart that East India rice was being sent out with the other supplies to the plantations but this was to be sold rather than issued to the labourers. From the earlier letters it is clear that the failure of the corn crop grown on the estates to feed the slaves was almost as serious as the failure of the cash crops of cotton and sugar. With the sudden cost that wages had thrown on the planters, and the unsteadiness of the workers it was no longer economically possible to devote land, time or labour to growing corn. Nor did it make sense to provide the former slaves with free food, as was done in pre-emancipation days, when the only way to ensure they would work was to oblige them to labour for wages in order to buy food.

After 1841 the plantations passed out of the hands of the Urquharts, probably following the death of William Urquhart in 1847. For a time *Craigston* was leased by two brothers, James and John Mill or Milne, who subsequently bought it. On their death it passed to their niece, Mrs Thomas Archer. She and her husband mortgaged the property, and lost it late in the nineteenth century. The new owners, who had foreclosed on the Archers, were Thompson, Hankey and Co, a London house with strong West Indian connections. From them it was bought in 1928 by the father of Edward Kent, the present owner.

THE ESTATE HOUSES AND THEIR CONTENTS

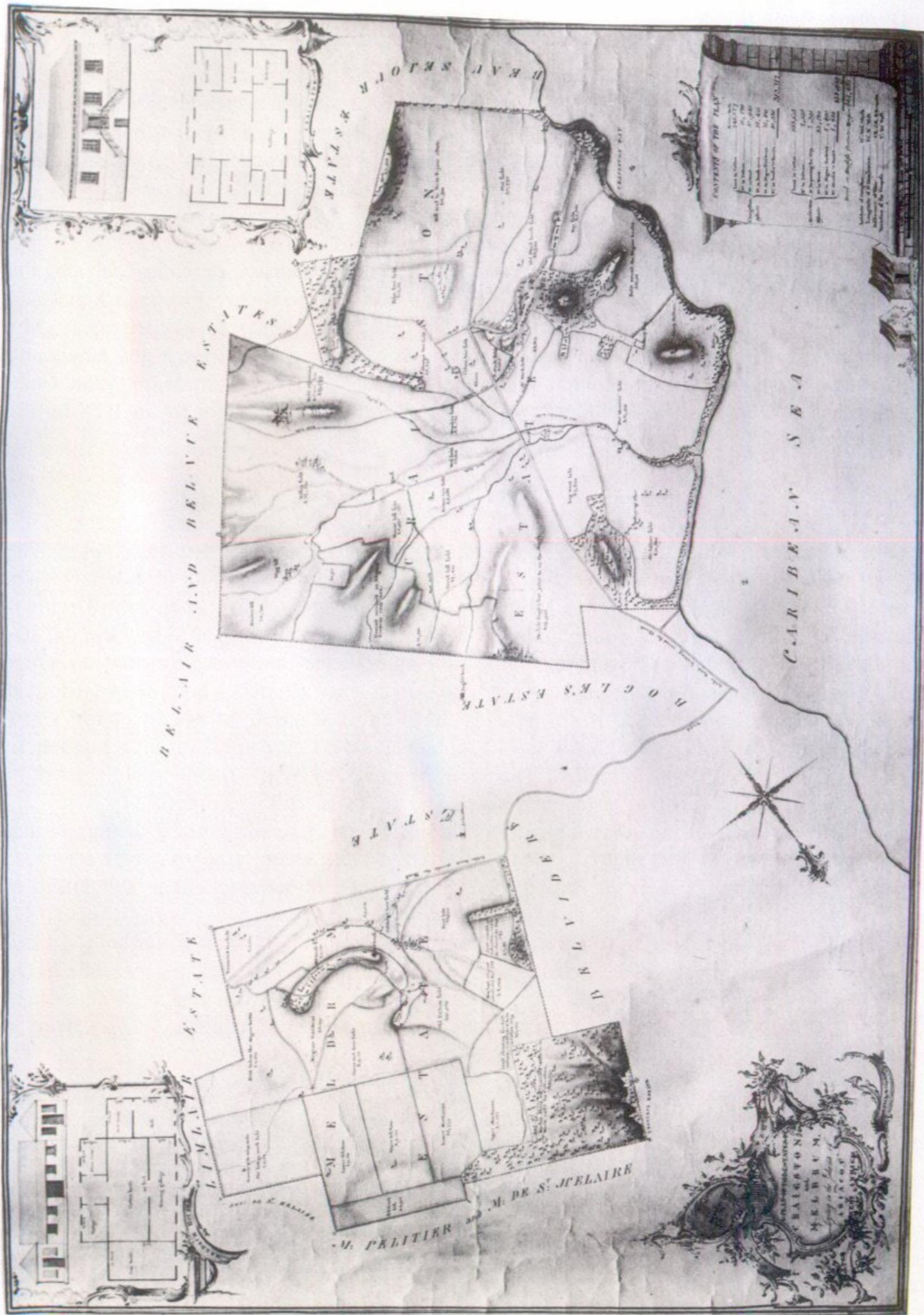
When William Urquhart made his survey of the estates of *Craigston* and *Meldrum* in 1788 he recorded an old house on each plantation (illus 4). There is no description of either of them and unfortunately the inventory of the contents of *Craigston* made in 1770, when John Urquhart bought the estate, is of little help (appendix 2). The column devoted to listing the furniture has either rotted or been eaten away and it is impossible to envisage the house from the inventory except to suggest that the entry for ‘three Wash basons and Three Chamber Potts’ may mean that these were three bed chambers. It is not unlikely that Robert Maxwell intended to build a new house; 3000 feet of lumber, 2500 shingles and 17 pairs of shutters figure in the inventory and these suggest that some building was intended. This view is reinforced by the considerable amount of material – ladders, saws, saw pit, carpenter’s bench and 411 lb of nails – recorded.

From the evidence of the surviving parts of the inventory there was nothing to suggest that Robert Maxwell aimed at anything more than a degree of modest comfort. His tableware – with the possible exception of a black basalt tea service – was stoneware, either saltglazed or enamelled, his candlesticks were of brass, and his coffee and chocolate pots were of copper.

Whether the style of the house was not up to John Urquhart’s standards, or whether it had become too dilapidated to repair is not certain but in 1777 he was able to build a new estate house at *Craigston*. In design it is not unlike some of the smaller great houses of Jamaica – *Bellevue*, and *Holland* – and calls to mind the description of Ferndale in Thomas Hughes’s *A High Wind in Jamaica*

... It consisted of a ground floor of stone given over to goats and to the children, and a first floor of wood, the inhabited part, reached from outside by a double flight of wooden steps. When the earthquakes came the upper part only slid about a little, and could be jacked back into position with big levers. The roof was of shingles: after very dry weather it leaked like a sieve, and the first few days of the rainy season would be spent in a perpetual general post of beds and other furniture to escape the drips, until the wood swelled ...

Craigston was a house of this type: measuring some 60 ft by 34 ft it was of two floors, the lower of stone and devoted to storage, with no direct access to the upper floor, and the upper, reached by two external staircases, containing the living accommodation. The old house had



ILLUS 4 A Plan of the Estates of Craigston and Meldrum in the Island of Carriacou: William Urquhart 1788

stood in the north-west corner of the estate; John Urquhart chose a new site, in the centre of the plantation which commanded an extensive view to the SW of Hillsborough Town and Bay (illus 5 & 6).

Unless William Urquhart's drawings of the house are very much elaborated, and there is no reason to believe this, it was a building of some architectural quality and elegance (illus 7). The stone lower storey is shown to be built with coursed and square-dressed ashlar work. It is not clear if this is of dressed stone or of stucco. The walls of the basement of the present house on the site are of field-stone rubble, and if these are original then the finish shown by Urquhart must have been stucco, but there may have been a more complete rebuilding of the house in the nineteenth century than is generally believed. The low storage rooms within the cellarage were entered by doorways under the entrance staircases and had headroom of only about 6 feet. In describing work undertaken this century, Mr Kent speaks of 'the original red brick columns' in the basement. This implies that while the external walls were of stone and the main floor beams were carried on columns, the partitions that existed were of timber.

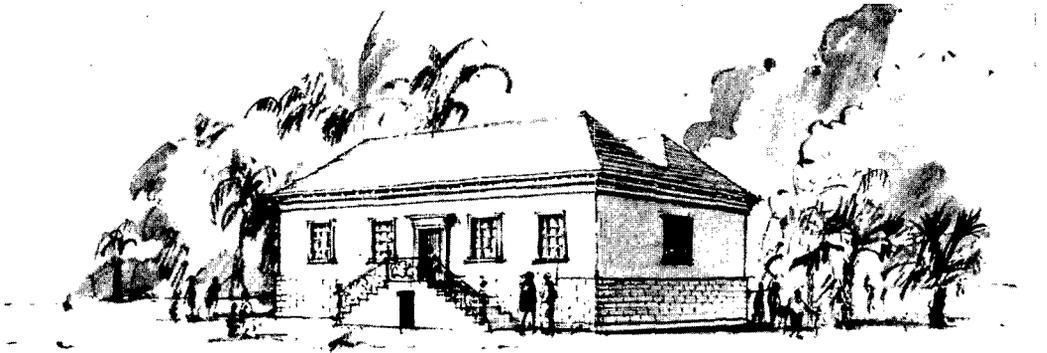
Above the cellarage the main floor contained the principal living rooms; the disposition of these influenced the design of the elevations. The front of the house, which looked S towards Hillsborough, was occupied by a Gallery 35 ft by 12 ft with a room at either end. These were 12 ft square, one being the Library and the other the Medicine Room. A great deal of doctoring had to be done on the plantations, and clearly John Urquhart attached considerable importance to this particular duty. Behind the Gallery lay the Hall, the principal or Great Room of the house. This measured 25 ft by 20 ft and enjoyed a northerly aspect. The four Bed Rooms, each measuring 15 ft by 10 ft, opened off the Hall. The Gallery and the Hall were reached from outside by external double stairs. These had been built originally with wooden balustrades and by 1787 these had become rotten and unsafe. William Urquhart had prepared a design for a new iron balustrade, and it is probably this design that is shown on the 1788 drawings. The main posts are capped by urns, and the intermediate panels are elaborately worked. The letters suggested that this could have been made by the Carron Company.

The north and south elevations are of five bays with a central doorway. The doorways have moulded architraves and flat entablatured heads with pulvinated friezes. The windows, which appear to be six-pane sashes, also have lightly moulded surrounds. No shutters are shown. The spacing of the windows is not equidistant; this results from the need to fit two windows in the Hall, one on either side of the central doorway, and its effect is to group the flanking windows with the doorways. Visually it is successful as it emphasizes the centre of the elevation, and by isolating the windows at either end strengthens the corners. The elevation is crowned by a heavy dentilled cornice and a hipped roof. The precise form of the roof is not clear: from the elevation it appears to be a single hip with a flat area in the centre, but from other examples surviving it is more likely to have been a double hip with parallel ridges and a central valley. It was probably finished with wooden shingles; a large number are recorded in the 1785 Inventory (appendix 3). There were no fireplaces, which is hardly surprising and the kitchen was in a detached building; a tall chimney still survives which is said to be part of it, although as its appearance is industrial rather than domestic this may be an incorrect description.

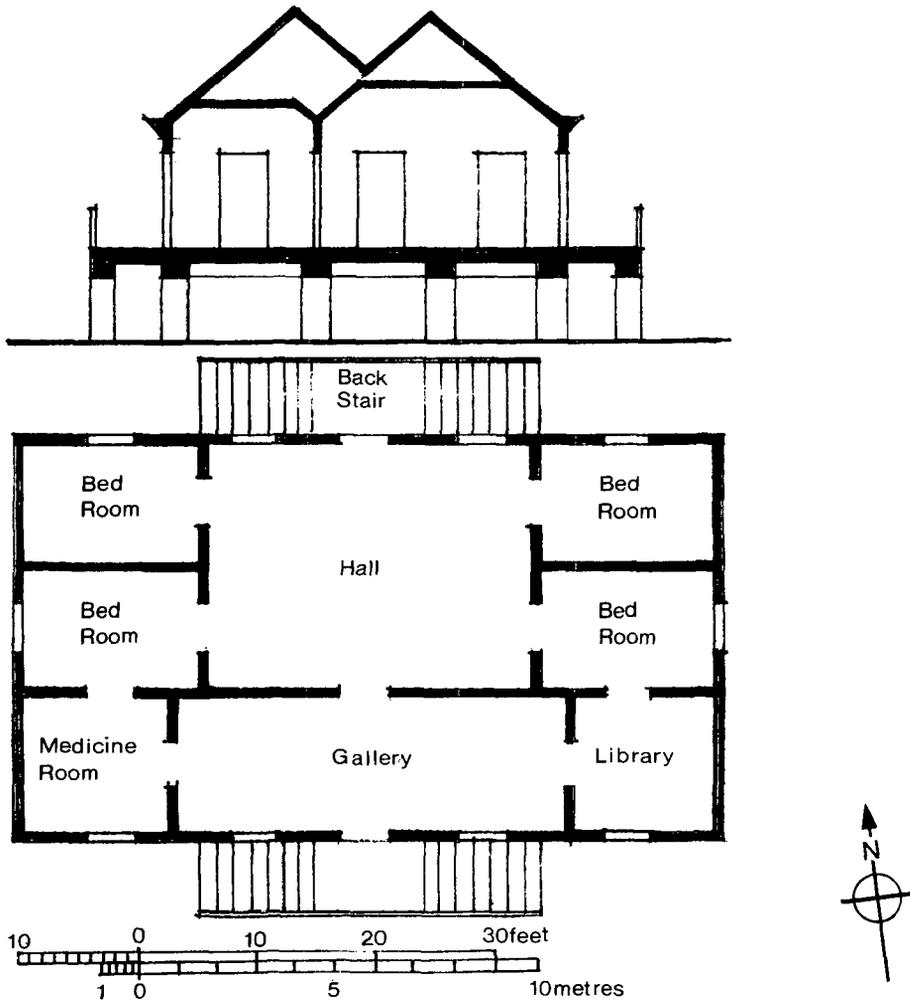
Edward Kent, the present owner writes

... The house my father bought looked remarkably like the house (or front elevation) shown on one of the plans of the estate that's in CC. It was an elevated bungalow of wood covered with galvanised iron on a stone foundation some 6 ft high with barred windows that served as a cellar below the house and was always cool.

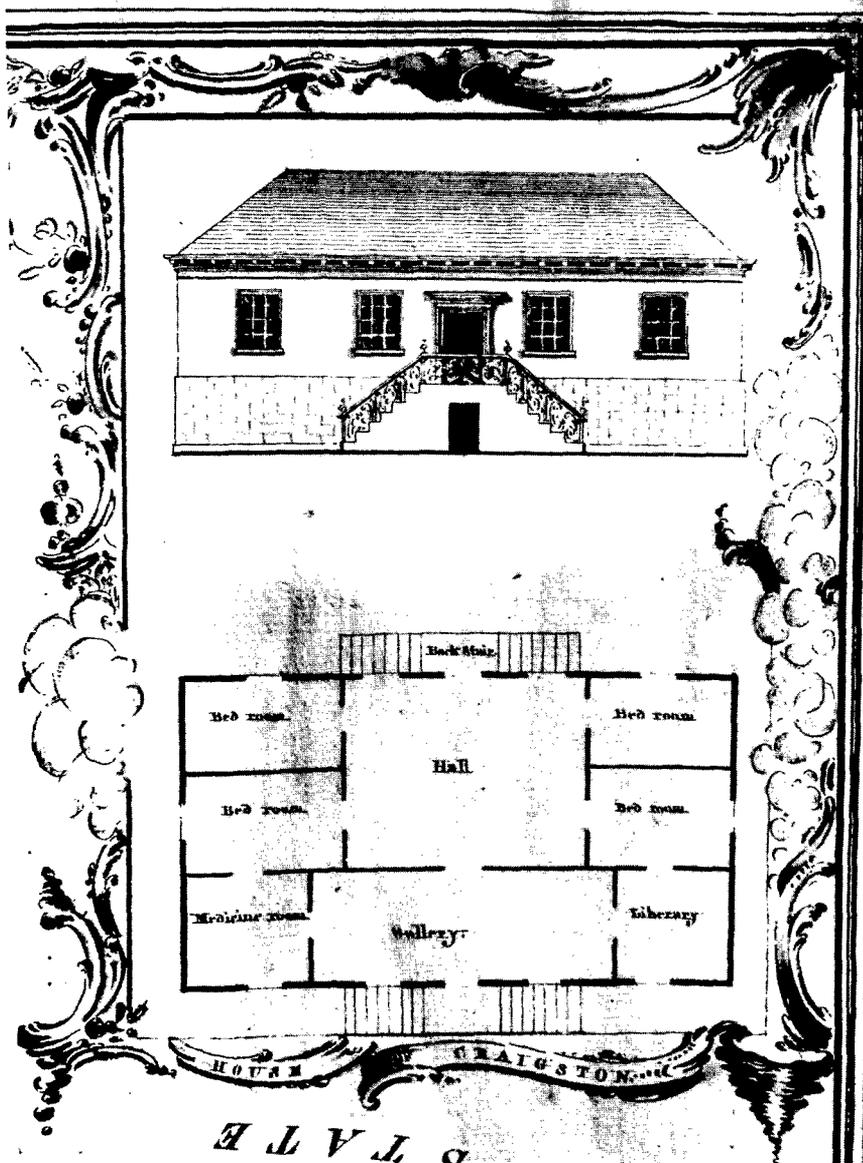
The upper structure was blown away by hurricane Janet in 1955. We rebuilt it in 1975 only



ILLUS 5 House of Craigston: reconstruction HGS; Realization TB



ILLUS 6 House of Craigston: plan and section



ILLUS 7 House of Craigston: detail from 1788 survey

changing it to the extent that we excavated the walls so as to give a depth of 8 ft downstairs. All the stone walls and red brick columns were preserved and extended in like material. The upstairs walls were constructed of reinforced concrete blocks but there-after we used greenheart, purple-heart and mahogany lumber with Marley tiles on the roof and tried to preserve the atmosphere of an old plantation house.

But we did turn the d-stairs into 2 bedrooms, a bath-room, store-, sewing and maid's-room, plus laundry and office.

In the course of rebuilding the house was also given an open verandah on at least one elevation. William Urquhart's drawings give no indication of windows in the cellarage, nor any hint of a verandah. This, taken with the change in the treatment of the external face of the basement walls suggests that there may have been considerable alterations carried out in the 19th century, possibly following earlier hurricane damage, and that the present rebuilding is more in sympathy with this than with the earlier house.

The contrast between the inventories of 1770 and 1785 is indicative of the improved standard of living that John Urquhart enjoyed. Three house slaves are recorded as being employed. Whereas Robert Maxwell used stoneware, this had been largely banished from the Urquhart table to be replaced by china; brass candlesticks were supplemented by ones of crystal and japanned ware; there were books for the library, prints to decorate the walls, and a backgammon board to amuse the idler.

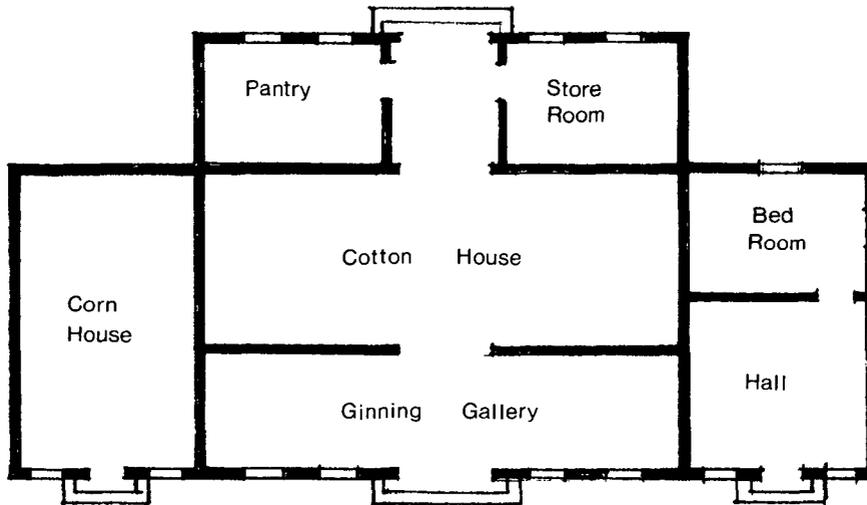
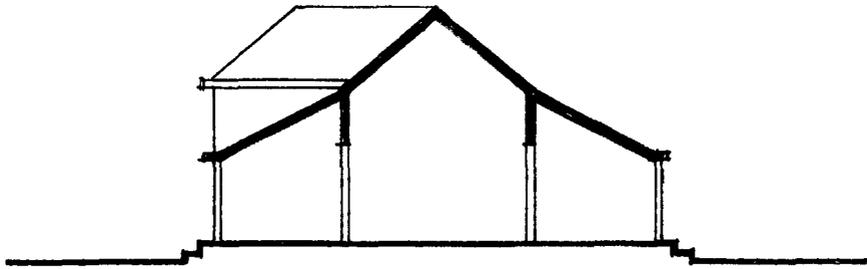
It is possible to furnish the bedrooms: a Bedstead, mosquito net and a chest of drawers in each, enough chairs and tables to provide one of both for each room. A mattress, bolster, two pillows, seven pillow slips and six sheets to each bed; close chairs and stools, and looking glasses. A degree of comfort and convenience that would not be unsuitable to a bachelor in Aberdeen.

As well as china the table was well equipped with silver and glass; too well, perhaps, in view of John Urquhart's tendency to gout and liverishness. Apart from 26 tumblers, and 31 glasses of different sizes, there were eight decanters, four carafes (or could they be for water in the bedrooms?), 11 claret glasses, four long cider glasses and two plated porter cups. To keep these glasses filled the cellar was well supplied. Several empty puncheons and 11 empty demi-johns had already yielded up their contents but there was still an adequate supply remaining; a cask of old rum, the greater part of a pipe of Madiera which was in bottles, 17 demi-johns of claret, four cases of claret, and two cases of Guernsey ditto – whatever that may be. The amount of liquor represented by this is truly appalling by our standard. Probably 85 gallons of claret and 80 gallons of madeira, without allowing for the few odd cases and the rum, in the cellar argue a very high standard of serious drinking.

The building of *Meldrum Houses* in 1787 also replaced an older house, but this was not intended as a great or estate house (illus 8, 9, 10). Both William Arbuthnot and Edmund Thornton refer to it as the *Cotton House* and its main purpose was industrial. It was primarily to provide the working core of the plantation and its domestic role was only secondary. Built of timber – there is the reference in 1787 to the carpenters building it – and, like *Craigston*, facing S, the main structure measured 40 ft by 35 ft. The centre was occupied by the cotton house itself, with a pantry and store room at the rear, and the ginning gallery in front. The cotton house itself

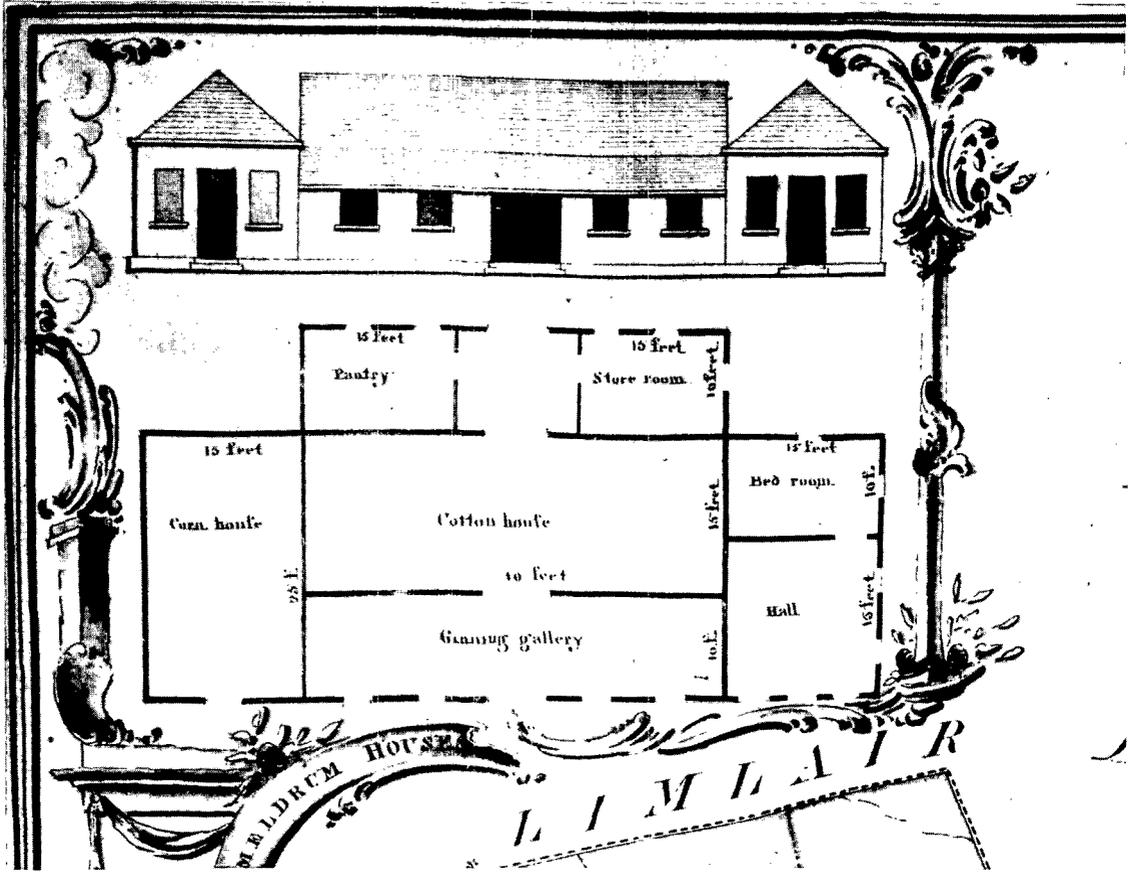


ILLUS 8 Houses of Meldrum: reconstruction HGS, Realization TB



ILLUS 9 Houses of Meldrum: plan and section

was covered by a high-pitched gable roof, whilst the other rooms had outshut or catslide roofs. At either end of the central blocks were smaller wings under hipped roofs. One was the cornhouse, where the corn for feeding the slaves was kept; the other contained a Hall and Bed-room, which was the home of the trainee-manager. The rooms were of decent size – the bedroom being the same size as those at *Craigston* – and there was no reason why the occupant should not have been perfectly comfortable but for the closeness of the work rooms.



ILLUS 10 Houses of Meldrum: detail from 1788 survey

THE PLANTATIONS

As with the houses, so with the plantations, it is possible to gather some idea of their arrangements from the 1770 and 1785 inventories and from the 1788 survey. The first point to note is the indication that between 1770, when a cassava pan was listed and 1785 corn had replaced manioc as the staple food of the slaves. This was grown as a second crop on both plantations. In 1770 only one corn mill was listed, but in 1785 there were eight mills at *Craigston* and one at *Meldrum*. In addition to the corn allowance, which was served out daily, the slaves were also given salt beef or pork and salt herrings. To this they were able to add the produce of their own gardens – about 20 acres were devoted to the negroes' gardens on both plantations, but it seems that additional land was also made available for this purpose.

In addition to the new houses shown on the 1788 survey there were the old estate houses on both estates, which may have provided accommodation for the indentured white servants (illus 4). At *Craigston* a cotton house is shown on the survey and the second stone chimney that still survives in a ruined state may be part of this – it is still spoken of as the 'old cotton factory'. The other major structure to survive is the cistern that was started by Mr Thornton in 1785 and was completed the following year. Partly dug into the ground it was built of field-stone rubble, the

inside being lined with yellow brick and plastered. Measuring 40 ft by 15 ft by 12 ft 6 ins it is the size of the main room – the cotton house – at *Meldrum*, and has a capacity of nearly 50 000 gallons. It is still in use and is said to be the largest on the island.

On neither plantation was there much stock; at *Craigston* three horses and a cow with her calf must have been for the service of the great house. A flock of 144 sheep at *Meldrum* may have been for food, and the ox was possibly a draft animal and used for ploughing. No mules are recorded, and it is difficult to see how ploughing was done, unless teams were hired from other estates. Even with a plentiful supply of slave labour hand ploughing would seem to be very wasteful. No buildings for stock are shown on the survey, although two fields on *Craigston* are known as stock fields and one as the ‘Old Stock House field’. A sheep pen is shown in the sheep pasture, which suggests that the flock was moved between the two estates. At one time in its history *Meldrum* must have been, or at least tried to have been, an indigo plantation as there is the ‘Old Indigo Work field’ with the remains of an old indigo works. The only other plantation building – apart from those occupied by the slaves – is a stable, which William Arbuthnot mentions as having been built by Mr Thornton in the latter part of 1785, and the Cotton House built by William Arbuthnot in 1793, at the Bay.

For the negro population of the two plantations, buildings were on a far more restricted scale. Both at *Craigston* and *Meldrum* there were groups of cottages which housed 200 people and amounted to small villages. On the 1788 survey William Urquhart has shown two small structures which may well represent slave cabins. Allowing for a certain degree of romanticism they appear to be rectangular buildings with thatched roofs, end gables and central doors, typical of the negro houses which still survive in the West Indies. They were probably built of wood. When William Robertson wrote in September 1806 for permission to build new houses on *Meldrum* ‘before the Crop begun’ – that is to say before the spring of 1807 – he obviously had a wooden construction, which could be erected quickly, in mind. In the 1785 inventory (appendix 3) it is recorded that one of the slaves at *Craigston* was a sick nurse; amongst her duties would have been that of attending on any inmates of the ‘Yawes House’,¹⁸ a primitive hospital in ‘Bay Field’ at *Craigston*. The annual arrival of the medicine chest, the ‘Medicine Room’ at *Craigston* and the provision of this building show that there was a concern – even if prompted by self-interest – for the health of the slaves and with provision for caring for them. If all else failed there was a burying ground on each estate.

WILLIAM URQUHART, SURVEYOR c 1758–90

12 November 1771

... P.S. John Urquhart our father’s old, faithful servant has an only son a very promising Boy (going 14) who I have hitherto taken charge of and Educate since they came here

With these words William Urquhart of *Craigston* introduced his namesake to his youngest brother, John. A promising scholar, writing an excellent hand, already at this early age studying French, William Urquhart was to prove an accomplished surveyor and draftsman before he disappeared in the 1790s in the West Indies. Who he was and why and how he came by his training is not entirely clear. His father James Urquhart is described as an old faithful servant of Captain John Urquhart. The Captain had died in 1756, when William his eldest son was only 15 and two years before William the surveyor was born. Why William Urquhart of *Craigston* should have undertaken the education of this boy, when he was to have 15 children of his own, must remain a mystery. It cannot have been to fulfil a death-bed promise to Captain John since he

would have been unable to see into the future. Possibly there may have been a deep affection for the old servant and a desire to help the son. It may have been that John Urquhart's wife had been Craigston's foster-mother, and given the close ties that this relationship could produce in Scotland he might have wished to do something for her son. The boy himself may have been such promising material that he attracted the young laird's attention. He would not have been the first lad to be educated by a kindly patron. But there does remain a doubt. In 1771 John had only been away from Scotland for two years and must have known the circumstances of John Urquhart's life, but Craigston was writing to him as if the boy's existence was something of which he could not have known. It is not beyond the bounds of possibility that young William Urquhart was the illegitimate son of the man after whom he was named, the result of a lapse from grace on the part of a youth of 17, and that old John, out of loyalty to his dead master, had brought the lad up as his own. Certainly William regarded John as his father.

A clue to this may lie in an undated letter, probably written early in 1787, from William Urquhart of Craigston to Thomas Campbell.

... I do propose to send out probably by the *Tivoli*, my friend and relation Wm. Urquhart the Surveyor, who I mentioned to you here, to be bred a Manager under Mr Arbuthnot, and who will live with him . . .

As William never seems to have referred to any degree of kinship when writing either to his brother or his nephew about this young man, it is curious that he should make this reference in a letter to a man whose only links with him were those of a business nature. Whatever the truth may be, young William Urquhart was educated above the normal expectations of a boy of his class, with the intention that he would go out to the West Indies and train in plantation management. For some reason this plan was not pursued and by October 1773 he had left the north-east to make his way in the world in Edinburgh, where he entered a Writer's chambers. This may have been to give him some legal knowledge which would serve him well either as a plantation manager or as a surveyor. The intention was still that he would be able to go out to the West Indies if he failed to succeed at home and although there was at this time no evidence that he was planning to take up surveying, it is difficult, in the light of what was to happen, not to think that he – or the laird of Craigston – had this possibility in mind. He was to find other work as in 1775 Craigston was to write that 'John Urquhart's son has got into something in Edinburgh'. One assumes from this cryptic statement that it referred to his occupation, although it could mean many other things. The years 1775–6 are crucial in the history of William Urquhart's development as a surveyor, for it was at this time that he must have received his training, as his first known survey dates from 1777.

In his introduction to *Peter May, Land Surveyor*, Ian H Adams, in discussing May's work, draws attention to the identical style of Urquhart's work. From this he makes the assumption that both May and Urquhart had been trained by John Forbes, factor to Urquhart of Meldrum. This assumption is in turn based on information contained in Ian Grant's important thesis on *Estate Management in North-East Scotland* where William Urquhart the surveyor is identified as William Urquhart, a servant of Urquhart of Meldrum, who in 1768 had witnessed a feu charter for John Forbes. Until the discovery of the Craigston letters, to which neither writer had access – nor of which they had knowledge – this identification must have been perfectly reasonable. Even with the discovery of the Craigston letters it was not at first clear: there was a family tradition that William Urquhart, the laird, had made the surveys himself to be discounted and there was the additional confusion caused by the appearance of William Urquhart, son of Meldrum, who was also in the West Indies. It was not until the letter of 17 June 1783 with its unequivocal reference

to William Urquhart, the surveyor who was the old servant's son, that the question of his identity was finally established.

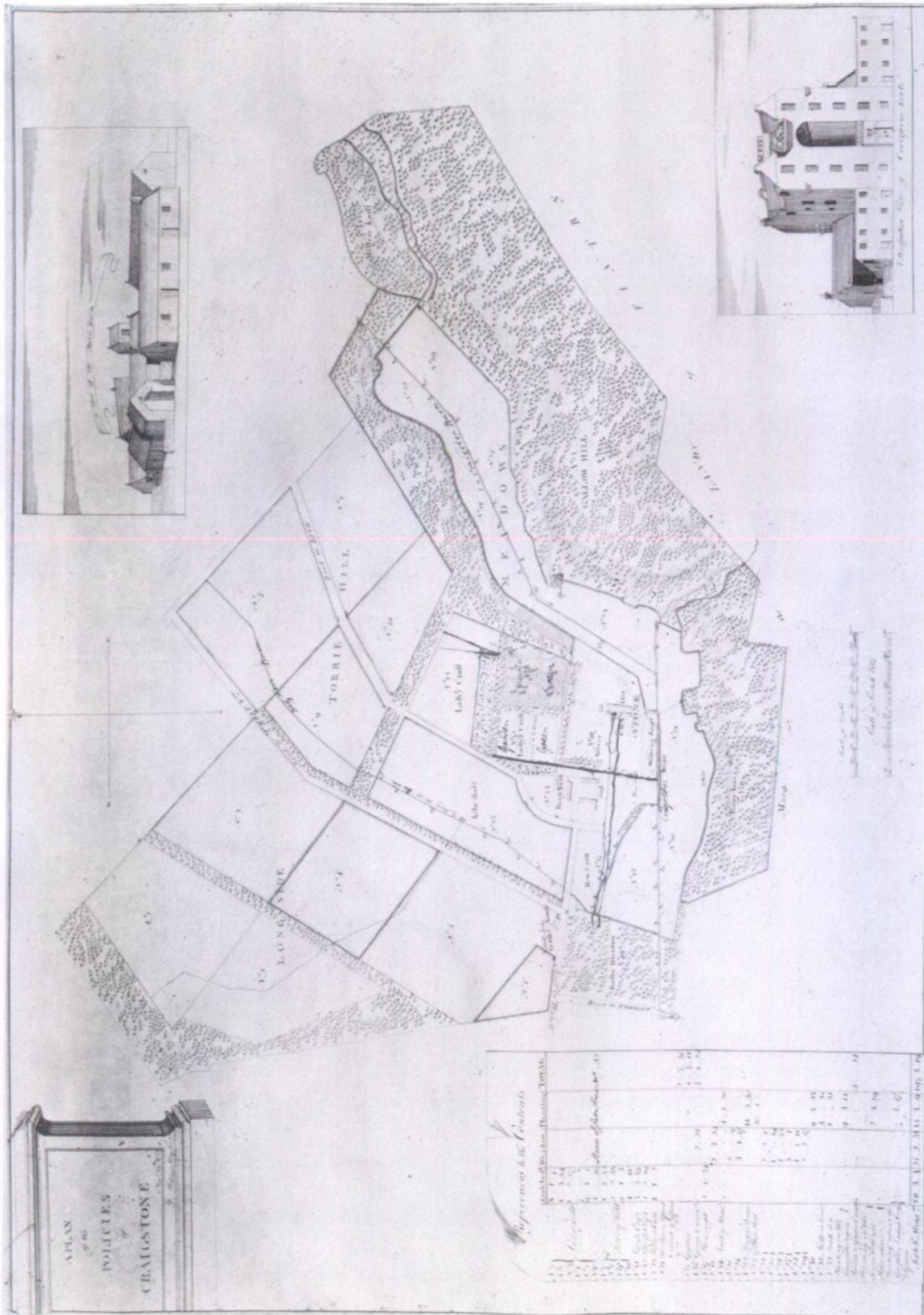
Although William was said to have got into something in Edinburgh in 1775 it was almost certain that he must have returned to the north-east the same year. The evidence for this is entirely circumstantial and must be based on the style of his work. This is so similar to that of Peter May, although Urquhart is the more delicate draftsman, that it is almost impossible to avoid the conclusion that he worked under May for some period. This was the time that Peter May was severing his links with the north-east, transferring from the service of Lord Findlater to that of Lord Bute, and it was unlikely that after the spring of 1776 he would have had much time to devote to the young surveyor. One of the most marked features of William Urquhart's work is the extraordinary accuracy and feeling for architecture with which he ornaments some of his drawings. This he may have learned from Peter May's elder brother, James.

James May, who was to die in 1803, had worked on land and building surveys for the Craigston and Cromarty estates from 1742 until 1771 and, although retired from active surveying, was living in the north-east. He seems to have been largely self-taught and his land surveys show how his education progressed from merely legible to very competent; but as a land surveyor he was never the equal of his younger and more famous brother. His building surveys on the other hand are accurate, detailed and highly competent, and it is likely that he passed this skill and taste on to young William Urquhart. It is possible that before the latter's departure for Edinburgh in 1773 James May had had a hand in his education.

Wherever and from whoever William Urquhart received his training it was completed by 1777, when he was 19. From that year dates his earliest known surviving drawing, *A Plan of the Policies of Craigston* (illus 11, appendix 1) which was completed on 24 November. It has all the hallmarks of his later work; the vignettes of the barnyards and the castle, the well-lettered title set in an architectural surround—in this case a classical pedestal—the table of contents as if on a separate sheet of paper, and a general legibility and neatness that is most attractive. It is a pity that the nineteenth century saw fit to make some ink additions to it. There is a further survey of the lands of Craigston unsigned but clearly by his hand, and dating either from the same year or 1778.

In 1779 according to a note on a plan of the feuars of the Seaton lands he was surveyor to the burgh of Banff—an appointment he probably owed to the Urquhart interest in the town. For his patron, William Urquhart, he was to produce, in the same year, two volumes of plans of the *Castleton* and *Dunlugass* properties, 12 sheets in all. His other work undertaken in 1779 was a survey of the lands of *Gaval*. This is a more elaborately treated drawing than the 1777 *Craigston* survey: the title panel is contained within a *rocaille* cartouche and there is an excellent and clear vignette of the House of Gaval. This shows it to have been an improved single storey farm house, with a roof space lit by windows in the end gables, and flanking farm buildings at right angles to the main house, with thatched and roped roofs. On the survey the nature of the land in each field is noted, and certain local claims concerned in a dispute over the rights, peats and limestone are recorded.

1780 was to prove an even busier year in which he produced a survey of the *Meldrum* estate, consisting of 23 drawings for Keith Urquhart of *Meldrum*, and a similar survey of the *Craigston* lands, which ran to 12 drawings for William Urquhart. Both these sets are magnificent examples of the surveyor's art and show how greatly Urquhart's technique had matured since 1777. This is particularly evident in the matters of presentation. Colour is extensively used and the contours are expressed by means of hill shading. The title panels are treated with great elaboration as is shown on the plan of the lands of *Craigston* (illus 12). Here it is set in *rocaille* cartouche with the



ILLUS 11 A Plan of the Policies of Craighston: William Urquhart 1777. (RCAMS)

addition of a tree and a ruin, but amongst the other drawings there are groups of implements of rustick toil, chinoiserie borders, draped urns, garlands of roses, porticoes, ruined thatched buildings, and other architectural caprices. These cartouches are most delicately drawn in ink and grey wash, and, beautiful in themselves, serve as admirable frames for the titles. These combine a number of different forms of lettering, plain and italicized capitals, script and gothick, all perfectly proportioned. Clearly Urquhart was a man of considerable taste, aware of the latest drafting and calligraphic fashions and with the necessary skill to make use of them.

Having completed his surveys of the various Urquhart properties he must have been looking for work elsewhere. If any commissions were forthcoming there is no record of them, and the next known work is a survey he made of the Cruive Dike on the Deveron in January 1782: this was for the defendant in the action *Banff v Fife* concerning fishing in the river. This is in black ink, and in addition to the general plan of the site, shows detailed plans of a cruive and a section through the dike. Less elaborate than the big estate surveys it is, nevertheless, beautifully clear, and contains a small sketch of the Rack Mill.

1782–3 were the years of great dearth in the north-east and money was scarce with the lairds, and on the day that Urquhart surveyed the Cruive Dike his patron was writing to his brother in Carriacou to enquire if there was any prospect of employment in the West Indies, pointing out that William was ‘an excellent Surveyor and good Drawer of Plans’. This came to nothing as sometime during 1783 Urquhart was provided with work for Lord Fife. He had probably impressed Lord Fife, or his factor, in the matter of the Cruive Dike. There is no indication of what the work was, but it may have been in connection with the new town of MacDuff that Lord Fife was laying out as a rival to Banff. There may have been some degree of family influence here; Keith Urquhart of Meldrum was Lord Fife’s brother-in-law, having married and mistreated Lady Jane Duff. This, apart from a survey of the coast from Peterhead to Gamray [Gamrie] Bay made in November 1784, possibly for Lord Saltoun, is the last known work he carried out in Scotland.

From the style of this drawing, which exhibits all William Urquhart’s mannerisms in an unfinished form it is likely that it is a first thought, and a more complete work was intended. Apart from the survey of the coastline the sheet contains *A Plan of Fraserburgh Bay* and *A Plan of the Harbour with a Scheme for its extension*. As the superior of the burgh, and one of the principal landed proprietors in the district, it is likely that Lord Saltoun commissioned this in an improving fit. The proposals for the extension of the harbour show the old piers enlarged and two further piers constructed to form an outer harbour. Urquhart’s notes on the drawing are worth quoting as they indicate clearly how well he knew his business

N.B If this design of carrying out the South Pier be thought too expensive a scheme is shown for widening the South pier (as coloured red) about 16 feet, but whatever alteration is made on this there is an absolute necessity for carrying out the other as far as the Ely Rock otherwise a secure harbour can never be obtained.

In the annexed draught three separate Plans are exhibited of the coast, bay and harbour of Fraserburgh. – The first comprehends the coast from Peterhead to Gamery including all the intervening bays and Headlands with the most remarkable Objects on the Shore. – The second shews a particular Plan of the Bay and Harbour with the Rocks lying at the Entry etc all laid down in local Positions. – The different depths of water in the anchoring grounds and in the Mouth of the Harbour with the depths off Kinnaird and Cairnbulg Points and marked agreeable to the stream tides. – The third scheme shews a design for extending the Harbour out as far as the beacon or Ellie Rock by widening and carrying out the North Pier and building an entire new South one of 30 feet broad in the form delineated which will not only make an easier and safer access but will gain 4 feet of additional Water; – but the better to secure the N Pier which will bear the whole stress of the Sea, it will be necessary to erect a kind of Breaker on the Inch

composed of large ponderous stones of the height of 5 or 6 feet that the heavy Seas may be broke and exhausted before they reach the Pier.

Either these recommendations were self-evident or this drawing was known locally for in 1791 the Rev Alexander Simpson was drawing attention to the lack of these very improvements which if provided would render Fraserburgh again a port of some consequence; and he was making use of Urquhart's own words. If Urquhart is open to criticism it is for his somewhat erratic rendering of place-names – on this drawing the *Ellie* rock is spelt in three different ways.

The next news of William Urquhart is contained in the letter of January 1787 from William Arbuthnot in which he tells his uncle that Mr Thornton has been made aware of William Urquhart's impending arrival on Carriacou. Mr Thornton's comments have already been given. The decision to send Urquhart out to the West Indies had probably been taken in the autumn of 1786. He sailed from the Clyde at the end of July 1786, and after a seven week crossing reached Carriacou on 15 September. His first impressions were contained in a letter to William Urquhart

Carriacou Sept 25th 1787

Sir

Having the opportunity of a vessel for Clyde, I deem it my duty to inform you that I arrived here on Saturday se'night the 15th (writ. after a Passage of seven weeks without meeting with any thing disastrous excepting a storm which overtook us a few days from Clyde, by which we lost one of the crew, and had the sails and rigging very much tore and otherways damaged; but having spare masts and cordage on board that, in the course of 10 or 12 days was remedied. I kept my health unexpectedly well during the whole voyage, not having been accustomed formerly to the sea. – Since landing a kind of Rash has come out on my skin, but without any sickness, which the Doctor tells me happens to some constitutions, in-stead of the seasoning fever that most Europeans take on their arrival in this Country.

Mr Arbuthnot received me very kindly, and has since shewn all the attention in's power, – with him I stay just now, and will need to do for several months, untill I see in what manner the Cotton is cleaned, picked, ginned and planted out anew, which I suppose will be in May before the whole procedure is gone through. –

The Island has a most beautiful appearance, and conveys the idea of one continued garden, finely diversified with hills and deep narrow Slacks, or Glens, interspersed with natural clumps of wood, whose soil has not been thought worthy of cultivation, which serve not only to ornament the face of the Country but likewise afford Shelter to the surrounding fields. – The soil is of a black rich mould, and stiff, which I conjecture has been Clayey, but since the Commencement of cultivation, by being so frequently stirred and exposed to the sun has been meliorated. – The house of Craigston stands on an eminence nearly in the Centre of the Estate and commands a fine view of the Bay and Town of Hillsborough from its front and of Union Island with the East part of this from its back. – I hope it will be in my power when the 'Tivoli' returns to Glasgow again to send you a Copy of the Plan of your property here, by which you'll be enabled to judge of quality and value of each of the fields being numbered and named, and by having a Copy of [my] Journal sent, what has daily been transacted. –

With fervent wishes for the health and prosperity of yourself and family.

I am with gratitude and respect

Sir

Your most obedt and most humble Servant

Wm. Urquhart

William Urquhart Esquire
of Craigston
Turreff
North Britain

His arrival at the plantation was welcomed by young William Arbuthnot who was probably in need of a companion—there was only four years' difference in their ages—and in November he was able to assure his uncle that the new arrival was a very agreeable companion. Within two weeks of reaching the island Urquhart had designed a new stair rail for the estate house at *Craigston*, and arrangements were being made to obtain a chain and theodolite as William Arbuthnot was hoping to find him some survey work. This in addition to the survey of the two plantations which had already been proposed.

Urquhart remained at *Craigston* for the remainder of 1787 studying cotton planting with William Arbuthnot and probably preparing the way for the survey which was completed the following year. He also carried out a survey of a neighbouring small island as William tells his uncle in a letter of 12 January 1788. This letter is interesting as it implies that there had been some discussion between the laird and Mr Thornton as to the possibility of Urquhart being able to find work as a surveyor in the islands. This does not find favour with William Arbuthnot at all

... I am surprised that Mr Thornton should seem to think that Mr Urquhart will get employment in the Surveying line. It is only upon new Islands where there is any chance of that, not upon Islands so long settled as Grenada and Carriacou. By great accident the person who resides upon the *Union Island* (a small Island about a league and a half from this) wanted it surveyed, and as there was nothing going on upon the estate but by Jobs I provided the surveying of it for Mr Urquhart—He is however perfectly sensible that he did not come to this country in the Surveying line but in order to learn the business of Cotton planting on your Estates: ...

Two weeks later however Edmund Thornton was proved right, for writing on 29 January William Arbuthnot was to thank him for giving preference to William Urquhart for surveying two estates on Grenada, and promising to write again as soon as approval had received to his leaving Carriacou. The matter was of sufficient importance for Thornton to write himself to *Craigston* on 5 April on the same subject.

With the completion of the new buildings at *Meldrum* William Urquhart moved there in May from *Craigston*, and in October he was able to start on the estate survey. The news of this is contained in a letter of 16 October to his uncle from William Arbuthnot

... There will be little work soon to do at *Meldrum*, when I shall get Mr Urquhart to make out a plan of your Estates—As the Theodolite which Mr John Campbell sent out to him may be—at times—of use to you, I hope you will not insist on it being charged to Mr Urquhart ...

This survey is perhaps the best of his drawings to survive (illus 4, 7, 10). It shows both estates with colour and contour shading, and from the notes that are incorporated it is possible to form a very clear picture of them, and their organization. It is enriched with decorative panels containing the plans and elevations of the great house at *Craigston* and the new house at *Meldrum*; the abstract of the contents is inscribed on a scroll that in its turn is draped gracefully over a rusticated pedestal from behind which appear two negro cabins. The title is contained within his most fantastical cartouche and is further elaborated with the Urquhart arms. It was probably completed towards the end of 1788, and from its condition must have been sent back to Scotland shortly afterwards. This really marked the end of his connection with the plantations, as by 7 March 1789 another man had been engaged to take his place at *Meldrum*. Possibly there was a degree of concealment of the intentions of several of those concerned. Whether replies had been received to the two earlier letters is not certain and from the context of a letter of William Arbuthnot to his uncle of 26 December and William Urquhart's own letter of 7 January 1790 it

seems unlikely as the decision to leave Carriacou appears to have been taken without the laird's written consent.

In his letter of 26 December 1788 William Arbuthnot is, for once, extremely explicit

. . . Mr Thornton informed me in consequence of some little pieces which had been seen of Mr Urquhart's, his character as a draftsman was so high that some of the principal gentlemen of the island wished him to survey several Estates, and Mr Thornton further added that if he was settled in Grenada he had not the least doubt he would make a great deal of money. When I mentioned this to him he was so delicate as to hesitate at first, being afraid lest you should be displeased with him leaving your estate . . . However I advised him to write to you, and that as I should not be off the island for many months he might go to Grenada. Upon his arrival there by the advice of Mr Thornton and Mr Stewart, another of the principal inhabitants of the island he went up to St Vincent to offer his services to Governor Seton in surveying some ungranted lands . . . The plans he makes are incomparable. There was never anything like them in this country.

He left with William Arbuthnot's encouragement to take this position which suddenly offered itself, and the step was to meet with the approval of William Urquhart of Craigston as is shown in the last letter surviving on the matter which William Urquhart wrote to his patron

St George's Grenada Janry 7th 1790

Sir

It has frequently been my intention to have wrote to you, both during the time of [my] residence on Carriacou, and since, but having nothing of a particular nature to communicate when thow, I imagined it might be construed into officiousness, as your nephew regularly corresponded with you on the subjects relative to your affairs: And at the time of leaving your employ I meant to have consulted with you previous to the taking such a step, being conscious of the ties which bound me to prefer your interests before my own: – but in this I was over-rul'd by Mr Arbuthnot, who (with a warmth of heart peculiar to himself) undertook to write you on the subject, and advised me to embrace so favourably an opportunity as in all likelihood it might never occur again – Thus induced by his advise, and assurance, that you would take no umbrage at the measure, I consented, – and am truly happy to find that it has met with your approbation.

I will not presume to hurt your delicacy so far as [to] endeavour to re-capitulate the innumerable obligations, which gratitude prompts me to enlarge upon, being sensible that to a mind so susceptible of benevolent sensations, as from experience I know yours to be – the enumeration would be irksome:– But you will forgive me, when I sincerely congratulate you, in having your business under the direction of such an amiable character as Mr Arbuthnot's – My fervent wish is that he may be preserved to forward your interest, and reap the fruit of his own merit.

The pecuniary obligations for which I stand indebted to you at my Outset – for passage – and for somethings which were commissioned from Mr Campbell at Glasgow by Mr Arbuthnot, – I am not quite certain as to the exact amount of, but conceive it may be at principal about £90 sterling – As it [is] my wish that a debt so contracted, may be honourably discharged – it will oblige me very much to have a state of it and if you otherwise be inclined, to send it to Mr Arbuthnot, and you may be assured that as soon as possible payment will be made: – from the Abstract state of your accounts, which I presume are annually transmitted, you'll see for how much I'm debited during the time I lived in Carriacou – If I recollect right you made me a promise of £30 sterling of salary the first year – for what longer period I staid upon the Estate, it never has been passed to your debit.

I had the other day some necessary articles from James Webster in Banff, and meant to have made an immediate remittance together with a few pounds for my father and mother's use, but as accounts are not readily got settled in this part of the world it must be deferred for 2 or 3 weeks – may I then so far encroach on your good nature, as [to] request you to see it debursed, when the remittance is made. – I am well aware Sir, of this piece of presumption and had I any other person in whom I could place any confidence, I would not put you to so much trouble, but I trust you'll forgive it – With wishing that Mrs Urquhart and you may long enjoy health and

happiness and that you may reape every possible comfort and satisfaction from your rising family.

I am Sir
with Respect
your most obedt. humble Servant
Wm Urquhart

William Urquhart Esq
of Craigston
by Turreff
Scotland

The end and the missing parts of the story may still survive somewhere. In some file in Edinburgh the details of Urquhart's work in a Writer's chambers between 1773–5 may be found. A thorough search amongst the Fife papers might show what he was doing for Lord Fife in 1784. Any number of estate records in the north-east could discover what work he had in hand in 1782, 1783 and 1785–6. If the elements, vermin, and civil commotion have not destroyed them there may be some records in the West Indies, particularly in Grenada to tell what he was doing after he left Carriacou, and had written his valedictory letter in 1790. The concern of this paper has been to consider the history of two plantations and a surveyor and their interconnection as it is told in the surviving or so-far-discovered papers and letters from one family and one house. It makes no other claims at all.

NOTES

- 1 William Jopp of Cotton, 1721–94, a wine and cloth merchant of Aberdeen. He served as Provost of that city on four occasions, 1768–9, 1772–3, 1776–7, 1780–1. Although elected again in 1786 he declined to serve on grounds of ill-health. He appears to have acted for William Urquhart as an agent for business in the city. One of his sons settled in Jamaica, and a daughter married Gavin Young, a future Provost.
- 2 Osnaburgh was a coarse linen cloth originally made at Osnabrück. It was ideal for half-skilled labour to make, and unskilled labour to wear. It was much used in the colonies.
- 3 Sir Richard Arkwright, 1732–92, an inventor and industrialist whose spinning frame revolutionized the cotton industry. He founded the works at Cromford in 1771.
- 4 *The 14th (Bedfordshire) Regiment of Foot*; both James Urquhart and William Urquhart were first commissioned into it. In the course of time it has come to form part of *The Prince of Wales Own Regiment of Yorkshire*.
- 5 Sir William Forbes of Pitsligo, 1739–1806. Possibly the most eminent Scottish banker of his day.
- 6 *The 30th (Cambridgeshire) Regiment of Foot*. After many transmogrifications it now forms part of the *Queen's Lancashire Regt*.
- 7 The Carron Company, founded in 1759 at Larbert, was one of the greatest industrial undertakings in Scotland in the eighteenth century. It was famous for its guns, hence *carronade*, and for the quality of its architectural castings.
- 8 Jean Jaques Dessalines, 17?–1806, had succeeded Toussaint L'Ouverture as leader of the blacks in Haiti. He had been born a slave and, although a soldier of great ability, was of a particularly ferocious disposition. By his defeat of General Rochambeau in 1803, he gained Haiti her independence. In 1804, after massacring the surviving French colonists, he proclaimed himself Emperor. He was murdered in 1806.
- 9 *pressed*: in this case the unfortunate Mate was pressed for service in one of His Majesty's ships, and not for information.
- 10 Jerome Bonaparte, younger brother of Napoleon Bonaparte, and future King of Westphalia, was at this time commanding a French man o'war under Admiral Willaumez.
- 11 Admiral Sir Alexander Forrester Inglis Cochrane, 1758–1832, a younger son of the 10th earl of Dundonald and uncle of the equally famous Admiral Lord Cochrane. He fought with great

gallantry at the battle of San Domingo in February 1806, and later in the same year was occupied in protecting the islands and shipping from a French squadron under Admiral Willaumez. Although he did not defeat the French on this occasion he saved the convoys which were gathering to sail home and of which the 120 ships lying at Grenada formed only a part.

- 12 *Chenille*: a caterpillar which played havoc with the cotton crop.
- 13 General Francisco Miranda, a Spanish–American soldier of fortune from Venezuela, who had served under Washington and Napoleon. He had received some half-expressed encouragement from Pitt and the Tories to raise a revolt in the Spanish colonies. Admiral Cochrane, thinking to please the government, gave him some support. This did not suit the Whigs, who never allowed principle to interfere with faction, and the change of administration in 1806 forced Cochrane to withdraw his help. Miranda was unsuccessful in several attempts on the mainland, and finally died in a Spanish prison.
- 14 An ill-advised attack – for commercial reasons – was launched on Buenos Aires in 1806. A combined naval and military force under Commodore Sir Home Popham and General William Beresford was despatched from the Cape and, although at first successful, the withdrawal of the naval force made the military position untenable. The soldiers fought with great bravery, but in the end Beresford was forced to surrender. Because of this gallant, but disastrous blunder a number of Regimental Colours are now in the cathedral at Buenos Aires.
- 15 *Glauber Salts*: A homely and revolting compound of sodium sulphate which acted as a purgative, called after a German of the same name.
Jollop: Also a purgative, derived from a Mexican plant. Used colloquially in the armed forces to describe any unpleasant medicine, but especially one of a scouring nature.
Sweet Oil: Possibly almond oil: presumably an emollient to counteract the effects of the aforementioned compounds.
Vinegar: Frequently used to thin the blood and as an antidote to too rich living; a common failing amongst the slaves.
- 16 *Ling*: a small fish caught in large quantities off the Isles of Scilly at this period, and salted for export.
- 17 The degrees of coloured blood and their correct description were a matter of great sensitivity in the West Indies. A mulatto was the offspring of white and negro parents; a quadroon the offspring of white and mulatto parents; an octroon the offspring of white and quadroon parents. Mustee could either describe the offspring of white and octroon parents, or be used colloquially for the half-caste, especially if the pigmentation and physical characteristics were white rather than black. The offspring of mulatto and negro parents generally sank back into the negro population. Wealth could always compensate – especially outside the West Indies – for coloured blood. Miss Schwartz, the Parlour Boarder, in Thackeray’s *Vanity Fair*, a ‘rich, woolly-haired mulatto from St Kitts’ married into the Scottish aristocracy – the MacMulls of Castletoddy.
- 18 *Yaws*: A contagious disease affecting Negroes, and characterized by raspberry-like excrescences. It was said that no white man could catch yaws, nor any negro yellow fever. As yaws is a version of the pox this last statement is doubtful.

APPENDIX 1: The known drawings of William Urquhart c 1758–91

- 1777 A plan of the Policies of CRAIGSTON
- c 1778 A plan of the Lands of CRAIGSTON (attributed)
- 1779 A plan of the feuars of the Seaton Lands (this drawing is recorded on the index of surveyors at the Scottish Record Office, but is missing)
- 1779 Volume of plans of part of the property of William Urquhart of Craigston:
- (a) Plan of the farm of HOLYMILL
 - (b) HOLM
 - (c) SCATTERTIE
 - (d) Abstract of Contents
 - (e) A plan of the lands of DUNLUGAS
- 1779 Volume of Plans of the estate of CASTLETON, the property of William Urquhart of Craigston:
- (a) Plan of the estate of CASTLETON

- (b) Plan of the farm of CASTLETON
 - (c) Plan of the farm of AUCHMUL
 - (d) Plan of the farm of EASTER LUNCARTY
 - (e) Plan of the lands of PLAIDY
 - (f) SUNNYSIDE and WOODSIDE
 - (g) Abstract of Contents
- 1779 Plan of the lands of GAVAL in the shire of Banff (SRO RHP 10767)
- 1780 Volume of plans of the estate of MELDRUM, the property of Keith Urquhart Esq:
- (a) A plan of the parish of MELDRUM
 - (b) A plan of the mains of MELDRUM
 - (c) A plan of the farm of ARDVORK
 - (e) REESQUE, KILBLEAN and GATOUSFORD
 - (f) A plan of the farm of ARDCONNON
 - (g) A plan of the farm of BALCAIRN
 - (h) A plan of the lands of BROWNIEHILLOCKS, MOSSHED, CRAIGHEAD and ROUNDLIGHNET
 - (i) A plan of the farms of NEW WALL and WARDNOOK
 - (j) A plan of the farm of OVER GOWNAR
 - (k) A plan of NETHERGOWNAR and GRIEVEHEADS
 - (l) A plan of the farm of FORSTERHILL
 - (m) A plan of the lands of HAWKHILLOCK, HILLHEAD, and Will Christie's land
 - (n) CHAPELHOUSES and CARDRUM
 - (o) A plan of the lands of TULLAH
 - (p) A plan of the lands of ARMEDDAN and GREENSPOT
 - (q) A plan of BLACKBOG and BYEBUSH
 - (r) A plan of the MILL of BALCAIRN, CAUSEYFOLD and CAIRNMYE
 - (s) A plan of HILLHEAD of BETHELNIE
 - (t) A plan of LIGHNET and MILL of BETHELNIE (surveyed Oct 1780)
 - (u) A plan of BETHELNIE and the OLD KIRKLANDS
 - (v) COREHILL and ARDEVIN
 - (w) A plan of the lands of LOCHTER (surveyed June 1780)
 - (x) Contents of the lands of MELDRUM, with an abstract of the contents
- 1780 Volume of plans of the estate of CRAIGSTON, the property of William Urquhart of Craigston:
- (a) General plan of the lands of CRAIGSTON
 - (b) Mains of CRAIGSTON
 - (c) A plan of UPPERMAINS
 - (d) HOLE of MORELASS with Alex.r Troup's Croft
 - (e) MILNTOWN and MILNLAND
 - (f) MILNSEAT
 - (g) A plan of FIRWEIKS
 - (h) CAULDWELLS and the Moss
 - (i) A plan of the Planting of Milnseat Glen, with the Old Moss Park and the lands of Craigs Glen
 - (j) Abstract of Contents
 - (k) A plan of the lands of FOULZIE
 - (l) A plan of the farm of NEWTON of FOULZIE
- 1782 A Plan of the Cruive Dike upon Dovern with (1) A Sketch of one of the Cruives, (2) A Sketch of one of the Cruives set open for the Saturday Slope, and (3) Section of the Cruive Dike (SRO RHP 666) (This survey was made 14 January, and sworn to 26 January for the defendants in the action *Banff v Fife* concerning fishing on the Deveron)
- 1784 A MS sheet consisting of three maps (PRO MPD 60):
- (a) A Draught of the Coast from Peterhead to Gamray Bay. The coast from Aberdour to Peterhead
 - (b) A Plan of the Bay of Fraserburgh
 - (c) A Plan of the Harbour with a Scheme for its extension
- 1787 A design for an iron stair rail for the estate house at CRAIGSTON WI (referred to in correspondence but lost)

- 1788 A Plan of the Estates of CRAIGSTON and MELDRUM lying on the Island of Carriacou in the West Indies, the property of William Urquhart of Craigston
 1788 A survey of UNION ISLAND WI (referred to in correspondence but lost)
 1788–90 Further surveys on Grenada and St Vincent

Note: All drawings relating to the estates of William Urquhart of Craigston are the property of Bruce Urquhart of Craigston and are at Craigston Castle; those relating to the estate of Keith Urquhart of Meldrum are the property of Robin Duff of Meldrum and are at Meldrum House.

APPENDIX 2: An Inventory of the Contents of Craigston Plantation 1770 (in four columns)

- ... Pans
 { ... an scales and two Nests of weights
 ... with fish plate, a ditto smaller
 ... plate, three Copper Sava pans two covers
 ... and a Quart Pewter Measure
 ... Quart and a Quart ditto Tankard
 [Pe] wter Tureen
 Two pudding pans, two tin funnels
 A Tinder Box, a pair snuffers, Three brass Cocks
 ... Drawers ...
 Three Iron Bound Pails
 Six Grey Beards
 Fourteen Damjeans
 ... Gilt Frame
 Two tin Measures
 Eighteen Stone Dishes, one Tureen and Cover
 Seven Pudding Pans and a fish plate
 Two Pickle Leaves and a Sauce Boat
 Forty four Stone plates
 ... Six Bottle Boards ...
 Thirteen Desert plates
 half hour glasses
 Three Wash Basons and Three Chamber Pots
 A Carving knife, 29 knives, 29 forks
 [Cho] clate Cups and Saucers, and 6 Coffee Cups
 [One] Tea Pot, two basons, three Cups and ...
 ... ter and 24 pieces of ...
 [br]ass Candlesticks
 { ... er Oven, no Cover, two trev[itts]
 ... f Pot Hooks, a Copper Coffee and Choclate Pot
 ... a Copper Tea Kettle
 A large Deal tray and two Lanthorns
 a Kitchen Crane, two hooks, a pair of iron dogs
 a pair tongs, an Iron oven peeel and Stand ...
 ... n Damask, brass nails }
 a Water Stone and Frame and a Small Jarr
 ... and bolster }
 Five Large and two small Jarrs in the House
 A Grindstone and a Rubstone ...
 A Vice, an Iron Crane to dust ...
 Two Mouth pieces, a pa[ir] ...
 a Washing forme, an ...
 Twelve Iron Padlocks
 Sixteen Cotton Ginns, of ...
 and twenty baskets
 Twenty two Iron Canouls
 Seventeen pair of Shutters and Cupb[oard] ...

Two pair of ^x and Eight pair of Hooks
 A Saba Canoe and a Chain
 Eight Lead Wts of 87 lbs
 ½ a Barrel of Tarr
 a Cott and frame, a Mattress and Pillow
 a Mattress and pillow
 a Deal Table
 a Parcel of Linen on the Hill
 3000 feet of Lumber at the Store and on the Hill
 2500 Shingles
 411 lbs of Nails
 a Corn Mill in the Plantain Walk
 a framed Saw Pit
 Two pieces of Lignu[m Vitae]
 . . . Gaurd for . . .
 a Small Quantity . . .
 Two Iron bound . . .
 a Parcel of Negroe . . .
 a Tin Watering Pot, a Curry Comb & . . .
 Three Account Books
 a Parcel of Cannoul Wood
 Four Pair of Sheets, 2 pair of Pillow Cases
 a Goat and Sheep pen boarded round with a
 partition for hogs . . . }
 Twelve Jarrs as fixed under 4 covers hinged
 Four large Jarrs at the Corners with their Covers
 a Carpenters Bench and a Wooden Mare
 a Ladder about 55 feet long & a do. about 15 feet
 a Ladder about 8 feet and two pair of Steps
 a Triangle and a beam and scales
 6 half . . . Wt^s. and 6 small Wts. Quantity 56 lbs
 a Small Pair of Scales & 5 Iron W^{ts}. Quty. 28 lbs
 a Large Copper Cassada Pan
 Four Copp[er] three tin Graters
 Two pairs o[f] gar[den] sheers
 a Coil of R[o]pe and]d two double & 2 single blocks
 Two Iron Crows
 Two Sledge Hammers
 a Wooden Mortar
 Two pit Saws with Tillers
 Two X Cu[t saws], two shovels, three spades
 Four Ir[on] . . . ins wt. 61 lbs
 Two Pie . . .
 Three Gra . . . [s]hovels, three pitch forks
 . . .
 . . . Cutlasses
 . . .
 . . .
 . . .
 . . .
 a parcel . . . New files etc in Walnuttree
 Nest of [Dra]wers
 Two . . . Copper Glue Potts
 a Borer with Six Joints, 2 Bitts, 3 Winches
 Five Broad Axes
 Thirty four Iron Potts wt. 374 lbs

APPENDIX 3: Craigston and Meldrum, Inventory, 1785

INVENTORY OF SLAVES STOCKS FURNITURE AND CORN CRAIGSTON ESTATE THE 15TH OF SEPTEMBER
1785

2 Drivers
 112 Field Slaves
 3 House Slaves
 3 Supperannuated
 94 Children
 1 Sick Nurse

165

2 Horses 1 Mare
 1 Cow 1 Calf

4 Bedsteads
 10 Tables of different sizes
 1 large and 1 Small side tables
 24 chairs and 1 Arm chair
 1 Sopha
 4 Chest of Drawers Two of them with Boureaux
 1 Cloaths Press
 2 Close Chairs 1 Close Stool
 2 large and 1 Small Spy Glasses
 3 Looking Glasses
 3 Liquour Case 1 Travelling Do.
 6 Mattresses 5 Bolsters
 9 Pillows 30 Pillow Slips
 25 Sheets 3 Couch Covers
 4 Mosquito Netts
 6 Large 4 small Table Cloths
 9 Towels 4 Coverlets
 1 Old Sopha 1 Old Bedstead
 5 China Bowls 5 China Mugs
 2 China Turins and 1 Stone do.
 3 China Tea Pots and 1 Stone do.
 8 China Cups 13 China Saucers
 2 China Dishes for Roast (T?) and 2 do for Fish
 2 " do for Pudding
 9 China Ashets 3 Stone Ashets
 15 China Soup Plates 24 Flat Plates
 2 do Sauce potts 2 do Milk Potts
 6 China and 4 Christal Salt Sellars
 1 Gould Watch and Gould Chain Seals etc
 3 Carving knives and forks
 2 dozen green handled do. and do.
 15 knives and 13 forks pretty much worn
 24 Silver Table Spoons
 4 Silver Tea Spoons
 2 Plated Porter Cups
 4 Christal Shades
 4 Japand Candlesticks
 2 Brass and 2 Christal do of different patterns

- 4 Large and 4 small Christal decanters
- 4 Christal Carrafs
- 4 " Basons
- 26 " Tumblers
- 4 Long Cider Glasses
- 11 Claret do
- 31 Glasses of different sizes
- 12 Ground Christal glasses
- 3 Musquets 1 Fowling Piece
- 1 pair Pistols 3 Cartouche Boxes
- 1 silver Breast Plate
- 1 Basket hilted sword
- 2 Cuttluses
- 1 Chest wt utensils for a Carpenter
- 1 Speaking Trumpet
- 17 Tarrs (?) some Shingles supposd 2000
- 25 Pieces of Hardwood, some Boards
- Several Empty Puncheons
- 11 Empty DemJans
- 1 Cask of Old Rum
- the greatest part of a pipe of Madeira in bottles
- 17 Demjans of Claret
- 4 Casks of Clarret
- 2 Cases of Guernsey do. ?
- a small collection of Books
- 12 Prints 2 Small Trunks
- 1 Cotton Dresser
- above 30 Ginns in indifferent order
- 1 Box of Cotton Cranks
- 2 Canoes, one of them old and crazy, the other lately purchased but wants repairs before it can be used
- 1 Back Gammon Table
- 3 Saddles and Bridles etc
- Vinegar Bottles Oil Bottles etc
- 1 Sugar Box 2 smaller do.
- Potts Frying Pans Grid Irons etc
- 1 Grindstone
- 8 Cornmills

INVENTORY OF SLAVES STOCK AND CORN ETC, MELDRUM ESTATE 15TH OF SEPTEMBER. 1785

- 1 Driver
- 27 Field Negroes
- 6 Children
- 1

- 35

- 1 Ox
- 144 Sheep
- 1 large wooden Chest
- 1 Corn Mill

I think the two Estates of Craigston and Meldrum with the Slaves, Buildings, Stock, Furniture etc. at a moderate valuation to be worth Eighteen Thousand pounds Sterling or Two Thousand Pounds Currency

Edmund Thornton (Grenada)

Carriacou 15th of September 1785.
 Due to him £579.18.½. Money found in his dish 45.3.4½ c.

APPENDIX 4: Craigston and Meldrum 1785: Land Use

1 CRAIGSTON

Zoziers Hill and Bigg Hill: 7-00
 Patch: ·921
 Grounds occupied as Negroe Gardens crop 1788: 21-100
 Great Hill Field: 7-420
 Round Hill Field: 5-975
 Acuma Tree Field: 5-682
 A patch: ·831
 Valley Field: 27-000
 Well
 Well Field: 3-600
 Brush wood wt Old House: 6-500
 Old Pasture field: 14-600 (with Burring Place)
 Logwood Field 7-650
 a Platt field 1-145 wt gully
 Bamboo Field 4-285
 Field Adjoining Bellvue line 17-779
 The Field Bogle's line joins to on the north 27-950
 Five Quarré field A. 21-125 wt Old
 Plantain walk
 N: Stock field: 3-425
 S: Stock field: 1-615
 Citron tree field: 3-028
 Orange tree field: 8-750
 Land which has never been cleared: 7-530
 Palm Tree Field: 14-121
 Hill next to Beau Sejour estate: 17-910
 Hill: 3-410
 Flat Field: 12-774
 Old Stock House field: 8-740
 Bay field: 3-765, wt Yaws House
 Field round negroe houses 13-00
 Sheep Pasture (wt Sheep penn) 8-850
 incl. Battery 2×18 pds. 1. 10" mortar
 { Negroe House
 Cotton House
 Cistern 2-320
 Cliffs 7-945

2 MELDRUM

Old Indigo work field: 11-220 wt. remains of old indigo works
 Lower Pelitiere: 9-110
 Upper Pelitiere: 9-110
 Pelitiere's Hill: 4-900
 Upper Martineau: 5-099
 Rockie steep hill covered with wood; unfit for cultivation: 22-895 (Meldrum Hill)
 Field below Negroe Hutts: 10-620
 Negroe Gardens: 8-490
 Land clearing for cultivation and intended to be in Cotton 1789: 6-260

New land, cleared and planted 1782: 4·000
 Land capable of cultivation and to be cleared for Crop 1789: 2·131
 Scrub: 2·225
 Road field: 8·650
 Cabbage Tree Field: 9·020 wt Burying Ground
 Old House Field: 5·242
 Negroe Houses and Old House 2·550
 Old Pasture field (wt pond 10·080)
 Tamarind Tree Field 3·830

CONTENTS OF THE PLAN

| | | Acres Parts | |
|------------------|---------------------------------|-------------|-----|
| | Land in Cotton..... | 245, | 667 |
| | do. in Pasture..... | 11, | 170 |
| <i>Craigston</i> | do. in Wood..... | 10, | 940 |
| <i>Estate</i> | do. in Brush Wood..... | 14, | 445 |
| | do. in Negroe Gardens..... | 21, | 100 |
| | do. in houses and roads..... | 10, | 380 |
| | | <hr/> | |
| | Land in Cotton..... | 108, | 658 |
| | do. in Pasture..... | 2, | 550 |
| <i>Meldrum</i> | do. in preparing for 1783..... | 8, | 391 |
| <i>Estate</i> | do. in Wood..... | 25, | 120 |
| | do. in Negroe Gardens..... | 8, | 490 |
| | do. in House and Roads..... | 1, | 740 |
| | | <hr/> | |
| | | 313 | 712 |
| | | <hr/> | |
| | | 154 | 949 |
| | | <hr/> | |
| | <i>Total in English stature</i> | 468 | 661 |
| | <i>Measure</i> | <hr/> | |

Latitude of Craigston.....12° 30' North
 Longitude of do. from London.....61° 21' West
 Difference of Time.....4 hrs. 5 mins 4 seconds
 Variation of the Compass.....2° 50' East

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

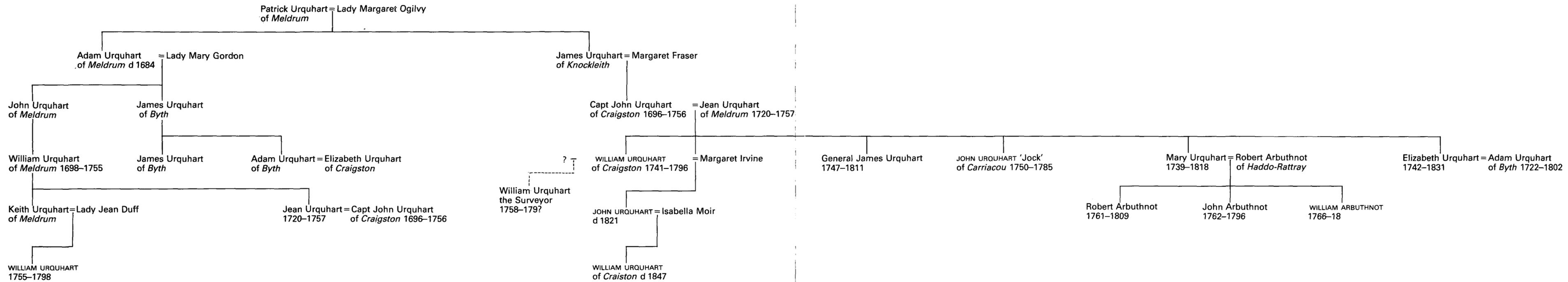
In the first place I am extremely grateful to Bruce Urquhart of Craigston for placing the Craigston archive at my disposal, for permission to reproduce the drawings in that collection and to tell the story 'warts and all'. Similarly the British Library has allowed the reproduction of Walter Fenner's map of 1784. Mr Edward Kent, the present owner of Craigston WI has kindly supplied details of the house and surviving buildings as they are today. For permission to make use of his unpublished thesis on *Landlords and Land Management in North-Eastern Scotland 1750-1850* I am indebted to Dr Ian Grant. Dr T M Devine has kindly allowed me to make use of his paper 'An eighteenth century business élite: Glasgow-West India merchants, c 1750-1715'. For his answers to my queries on West Indian estate buildings I must thank Dr David Buisseret. My colleague, Mr Ian Stuart has been an invaluable source of information on matters various and military that occur in the papers. Finally I value enormously the reconstruction drawings of the two plantation houses provided by Mr Terry Ball.

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ILLUS 1. THE URQUHART FAMILY and the West Indies