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Merchant Capital and the Origins of the Barbados Sugar Boom, 1627-1672

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Abstract

This dissertation undertakes the first systematic study of the English merchants who financed the Barbados sugar boom in the mid-seventeenth century. It brings together archival material from the UK, USA, and the Caribbean to explore their involvement with Barbados in detail and put their commercial activity into metropolitan and global context. I trace how merchant capital was invested in the Barbadian economy during the 1640s, produced transformative social and economic changes on Barbados and in England over the next two decades, before being withdrawn in the 1660s and reinvested elsewhere. By placing the merchant financiers of the sugar boom and their trading networks at the centre of my analysis, I work at the intersection of three historiographical subfields which are usually studied separately: the history of early modern England, Caribbean history, and global history. Bringing these fields into conversation has revealed the importance of both political events occurring in the metropole and the expansion of the empire in other parts of the globe to the development of the Barbadian sugar industry. The capital which merchants used to finance the growth of plantation slavery was generated through a variety of domestic and global business activities, and the political and economic uncertainty caused by the English Civil War (1642-49) was a key reason why London merchants invested such large amounts of money in land and enslaved Africans in the colony during the 1640s. This results in an analysis of early modern empire that is more global than is usually seen in current studies of seventeenth-century colonialism. It encourages historians to conceptualise the constituent parts of the seventeenth-century English empire in America, West Africa, Asia, and the Mediterranean as an integrated whole.

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Note on Currency

In the mid-seventeenth century Barbadian merchants and planters priced most of their transactions in terms of a money of account known as Barbados currency. A lack of surviving legislation which clearly establishes the exchange rate of Barbados currency before 1666 means that historians are unsure about its value in relation to English pounds sterling during the 1640s and 1650s. John McCusker and Russell Menard have estimated that it took about £133 of Barbados currency to purchase £100 sterling in these decades. Both currencies use the £ sign, and so in this dissertation I have identified when I am talking about Barbados currency by writing BMC (Barbados Money Currency) after the value- e.g. £200 BMC.

A lack of specie circulating in the Barbadian economy meant that local commodities were also often used as a medium of exchange and to settle debts. It is not entirely clear, however, whether these commodities were merely used as an accounting device or if they actually changed hands. Over the course of the 1640s there was a shift away from the use of tobacco and cotton as currency, and by 1650 sugar was the dominant form of commodity currency. This reflects the rise in sugar as the most significant Barbadian export crop. The best estimates for the 1640s are that 1 lb. of tobacco was worth 2d. in Barbados Money Currency, 1 lb. of cotton was worth 4d., and 1 lb. of sugar was worth 6d. In this dissertation I have remained true to the source material by replicating the currencies which contemporaries used: so that, for example, property on Barbados might be sold for 1500 lb. of tobacco or 500 lb. of sugar.

For a more detailed description of Barbadian currency and exchange rates in the mid-seventeenth century, see John J. McCusker & Russell R. Menard, "The Sugar Industry in the Seventeenth Century: A New Perspective on the Barbadian "Sugar Revolution"", in Stuart B. Schwartz, ed., *Tropical Babels: Sugar and the Making of the Atlantic World, 1450-1680* (Chapel Hill, 2004), pp. 306-311.

Abbreviations

Acts and Ordinances – C. H. Firth and R. S. Rait, eds, *Acts and Ordinances of the Interregnum, 1642-1660*, 2 vols. (London, 1911).

Add. Ms. – Additional Manuscripts, British Library, London.

APCC – W. L. Grant and James Munro, eds, *Acts of the Privy Council of England, Colonial Series: Vol. 1, 1613-1680* (Hereford, 1908).

Barbados Council Minutes – Minutes of the Council of Barbados, 1654-1658 (typescript, 1934). Available at the British National Archives: PRO 31/17/43 & PRO 31/17/44.

BDA – Barbados Department of Archives, Black Rock, Barbados.

BL – British Library, London, UK.

CCMEIC – Ethel B. Sainsbury, ed., *A Calendar of Court Minutes, etc., of the East India Company, 1635-1639 to 1677-1679*, 11 vols., with introductions by Sir William Foster (Oxford, 1907-38).

CO – Colonial Office Papers, The National Archives, London, UK.

Complete Book of Emigrants – Peter Wilson Coldham, *The Complete Book of Emigrants, 1607-1660* (Baltimore, 1987).

CSPC AWI – W. Noel Sainsbury et al., eds, *Calendar of State Papers, Colonial Series, American and West Indies*, 44 vols. (London, 1860-1963).

Hartlib Papers – M. Greengrass, M. Leslie, and M. Hannon, eds, *The Hartlib Papers*, available online at: <https://www.dhi.ac.uk/hartlib/> (Accessed 30 November 2019).

Hay Papers – Hay of Haystoun Papers, Scottish Record Office, Edinburgh, UK.

HCA – High Court of Admiralty records, The British National Archives, Kew, UK.

IOR – India Office Records, the British Library, London, UK.

LMA – London Metropolitan Archives, London, UK.

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MCD – Mayor's Court of London Depositions, London Metropolitan Archives, London, UK.

ODNB – Oxford Dictionary of National Biography (Online edition).

Proceedings and Debates – Leo Francis Stock, ed., *Proceedings and Debates of the British Parliaments Respecting North America*, Vol. I (Washington, 1934).

RB 3 – Recopied Deed Record Books, Barbados Department of Archives.

RB 6 – Recopied Will Record Books, Barbados Department of Archives.

SP – State Papers, The British National Archives, Kew, UK.

SRO – Scottish Record Office, Edinburgh, UK.

Thurloe Papers – Thomas Birch, ed., *A Collection of the State Papers of John Thurloe*, 7 vols. (London, 1742).

TNA – The British National Archives, Kew, UK.

Winthrop Papers – Worthington C. Ford, Stewart Mitchell, Allyn Bailey Forbes, and Malcolm Freiberg, eds, *The Winthrop Papers*, 6 vols. (Boston, 1925-92).

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Introduction

Between 1550 and 1650 England underwent profound commercial change. The island nation was transformed from a marginal power on the northwest fringes of Europe, whose main overseas commercial activity was the export trade in woollen cloth, to a nation with an assertive merchant community that actively sought to strike out into the wider world. Beginning with the incorporation of joint-stock companies such as the Muscovy Company in 1555 and the Turkey Company in 1581, English merchants and aristocrats started to participate in long-distance trade to distant and unfamiliar parts of the globe. By the middle of the seventeenth century, England maintained trading factories in the eastern Mediterranean, West Africa, the Persian Gulf, the Indian subcontinent, and Southeast Asia.¹ But it was the promise of wealth and glory in the Americas which captured the imaginations of English adventurers and colonisers. Schemes to establish a permanent English presence in North America and the Caribbean were launched in increasing numbers after 1585, and despite several failures, by the 1620s had begun to see success. When compared to some other European nations, however, England's foothold on American soil was still insecure in 1650. Her nascent empire consisted of 14 dispersed colonies which hugged the eastern seaboard of North America, occupied a few of the tiny islands in the Lesser Antilles, and straddled the estuary of the Suriname River in northern Guiana.² Most of these settlements were poorly defended, unable to support themselves without external assistance, and had struggled to find a viable cash crop. The recent failure of the Providence Island colony (near modern-day Nicaragua), which had been destroyed by Spanish forces, served as a stark reminder of the fate which was likely to befall English colonies in the New World.³

¹ On seventeenth-century overseas trading companies from a comparative perspective, see William A. Pettigrew and David Veevers, eds, *Transoceanic Constitutions: The Corporation as a Protagonist in Global History, 1550-1750* (Leiden, 2019).

² The English colonies in North America and the Caribbean in 1650 were: Antigua, Barbados, Bermuda, Connecticut, Maryland, Massachusetts Bay, Montserrat, Nevis, New Haven, New Hampshire, Rhode Island, St. Christopher (modern-day St. Kitts), Surinam and Virginia.

³ Karen Ordahl Kupperman, *Providence Island, 1630-1641: The Other Puritan Colony* (Cambridge, 1993).

In 1650 England had just finished being convulsed by a destructive and bloody civil war, which had culminated in regicide. In protest at this revolutionary turn-of-events, several of the American plantations had revolted against the new regime.⁴ One of these rebellious colonies was Barbados. A small island of just 166 square miles, located on the eastern fringes of the Lesser Antilles archipelago, Barbados had been an English colony since it was first settled in 1627. In their search for a profitable export commodity, planters on the island had begun by producing tobacco, before diversifying their economy in the late 1630s and early 1640s by experimenting with the cultivation of cotton, indigo, ginger, and sugar. A commercial sugar industry first emerged on Barbados in 1643, fostering an economic boom and the rapid expansion of plantation slavery. It was on this small and isolated island, then, that drastic social and economic changes were underway in 1650, which would forever reshape the Caribbean and alter the future development of the British Empire.

The Caribbean sugar boom, a period of remarkable economic expansion and social change which began on Barbados in the 1640s, was a pivotal moment in world history. Events on Barbados precipitated the expansion of African slavery and the plantation system, institutions which would transform the demography and environment of vast swathes of the Americas. It is a centrepiece of early American historiography that Barbados functioned as a ‘culture hearth’ for a variety of English-speaking colonies in the Americas.⁵ The legal codes and labour systems pioneered on Barbados were disseminated throughout the Greater Caribbean by a ‘Barbadian diaspora’ in the 1650s and 1660s, meaning that the transformations which occurred on Barbados in the mid-seventeenth century had a powerful impact far beyond the island’s own shores.⁶ By the 1680s, for instance, Barbadian experts in sugar cultivation and

⁴ On the English Civil War and its impact in the American colonies, see Carla Gardina Pestana, *The English Atlantic in an Age of Revolution, 1640–1661* (Cambridge, Mass., 2007); John Donoghue, *Fire Under the Ashes: An Atlantic History of the English Revolution* (Chicago, 2013).

⁵ The concept of a ‘culture hearth’ was coined by D. W. Meinig in *The Shaping of America: A Geographical Perspective on 500 Years of History: Volume I, Atlantic America, 1492–1800* (New Haven, 1986), p. 52.

⁶ The argument that Barbados was important for exporting the plantation system to other British colonies in the Americas has been advanced by numerous scholars. For examples, see Alfred D. Chandler, ‘The Expansion of Barbados’, *Journal of the Barbados Museum and Historical Society*, Vol. 13, No. 3-4 (1946), pp. 106-136; Jack P. Greene, ‘Colonial South Carolina and the Caribbean Connection’, *The South Carolina Historical Magazine*, Vol. 88, No. 4 (1987), pp. 192-210; Russell R. Menard, *Sweet Negotiations: Sugar, Slavery, and Plantation Agriculture in Early Barbados* (Charlottesville, VA., 2006), pp. 106-121; Christopher Tomlins, *Freedom Bound: Law, Labor, and Civic Identity in Colonizing English America, 1580-1865* (Cambridge, 2010), pp. 428-431; Matthew Mulachy, *Hubs of Empire: The Southeastern Lowcountry and the British Caribbean* (Baltimore, 2014), pp. 3-4, 61-62. For a recent treatment of how the ‘Barbadian diaspora’ was important in expanding sugar cultivation to Surinam and Jamaica, see Justin Roberts,

the management of enslaved Africans could be found as far away as Sumatra in southeast Asia.⁷ The history of mid-seventeenth-century Barbados is thus critical for understanding the origins of the system of plantation slavery which would develop in the British Empire and the United States.

To better understand the origins of the sugar boom, this dissertation will examine how the rapid development of the Barbadian sugar industry was financed in the 1640s and 1650s. Based upon accounts written in the second half of the seventeenth century, historians originally presumed that it was Dutch merchants who funded the expansion of sugar production on Barbados.⁸ In recent years, however, revisionists such as Russell Menard and Larry Gragg have used evidence from the Barbados Department of Archives to question the extent to which Dutch involvement in the Barbadian economy precipitated the sugar boom, arguing instead that the business activities of English merchants in this period were of greater significance than has been previously understood.⁹ Menard has demonstrated that there is little quantitative evidence of Dutch merchants extending credit to English planters on Barbados, and that their recorded involvement in the slave trade to the island was minimal during the 1640s and 1650s.¹⁰ This argument has been supported by scholars who have undertaken archival research in the Netherlands. Historians of the Dutch Atlantic world and Anglo-Dutch trade, including Wim Klooster and Christian Koot, have found almost no evidence to suggest that traders from the Low Countries supplied sugar mills and other machinery to Barbadian planters in large quantities, nor that they were major purveyors of enslaved Africans to the colony in the early stages of sugar production.¹¹

‘Surrendering Surinam: The Barbadian Diaspora and the Expansion of the English Sugar Frontier, 1650-75’, *The William and Mary Quarterly*, Vol. 73, No. 2 (2016), pp. 225-256.

⁷ BL, IOR E/3/91, f. 179, London to St. Helena, 3 August 1687.

⁸ The argument that the Dutch financed the growth of the sugar industry and African slavery on Barbados in the 1640s has been entrenched in the historiography for decades. For examples, see Richard S. Dunn, *Sugar and Slaves: The Rise of the Planter Class in the English West Indies, 1624-1713* (Chapel Hill, 1972), pp. 19-20, 65-66, 230-231; Richard B. Sheridan, *Sugar and Slavery: An Economic History of the British West Indies, 1623-1775* (Kingston, Jamaica, 1974), p. 130; Gary A. Puckrein, *Little England: Plantation Society and Anglo-Barbadian Politics, 1627-1700* (New York, 1984), p. 71; Philip D. Curtin, *The Rise and Fall of the Plantation Complex: Essays in Atlantic History* (Cambridge, 1990), pp. 81-83; Robin Blackburn, *The Making of New World Slavery: From the Baroque to the Modern, 1492-1800* (New York, 1997), pp. 229-232; Yda Schreuder, ‘The Influence of the Dutch Colonial Trade on Barbados in the Seventeenth Century’, *Journal of the Barbados Museum and Historical Society*, Vol. 48 (2002), pp. 50-57.

⁹ Menard, *Sweet Negotiations*, ch. 3; Larry Gragg, *Englishman Transplanted: The English Colonization of Barbados, 1627-1660* (Oxford, 2003), pp. 121-124 & ch. 7.

¹⁰ Menard, *Sweet Negotiations*, p. 4, 59-64.

¹¹ Ernst van den Boogaart and Pieter C. Emmer, ‘The Dutch Participation in the Atlantic Slave Trade, 1596-1650’, in Henry A. Gemery and Jan S. Hogendorn, eds, *The Uncommon Market: Essays in the Economic History of the Atlantic Slave Trade* (New York, 1979), pp. 353-375; Christian J. Koot, *Empire at the Periphery: British Colonists, Anglo-Dutch*

The importance of Dutch financial assistance to the growth of the Barbados sugar industry in the 1640s has been overstated. Inter-imperial exchanges on Barbados in the mid-seventeenth century mainly took place at the water's edge: only a few Dutch traders were permanent inhabitants and owned landed property in the colony, and it was rare for them to extend credit to English planters.¹² Nonetheless, it is crucial to emphasise that the traditional interpretation of the role played by Dutch merchants in stimulating Caribbean plantation economies during the seventeenth century was not completely incorrect. Traders from the Low Countries did participate in the provisioning trade to Barbados, supplying planters with the foodstuffs, alcohol, clothing, shoes, and draught animals they needed to thrive in the tropics and keep their sugar mills turning.¹³ Tobacco farmers at English colonies in the Leeward Islands were heavily dependent on resident Dutch merchants to supply the credit and labour necessary for them to expand their small plantations.¹⁴ Moreover, the beginnings of a sugar industry on the French islands of Martinique and Guadalupe in the second half of the 1650s can be tied to an injection of Dutch capital. Following the fall of Pernambuco in 1654, 600 Dutch refugees and their 300 enslaved Africans fled to the French Caribbean colonies, providing French colonists with crops and technical knowledge. French sugar planters were far more dependent on commercial traffic with the United Provinces and credit extended by Dutch merchants than English colonists on Barbados.¹⁵

Historians are now in broad agreement that it was English merchants, rather than the Dutch, who were most significant in providing the capital needed to initiate sugar production on Barbados in the 1640s. But there has never been a systematic study of the English merchants who financed the sugar boom, which brings together archival material from the UK, USA, and the Caribbean to explore their involvement with Barbados in detail and put their commercial activity into metropolitan and global context. We therefore know very little about a group which played a major role in the development of

Trade, and the Development of the British Atlantic, 1621-1713 (New York, 2011), pp. 55-58; Wim Klooster, *The Dutch Moment: War, Trade, and Settlement in the Seventeenth-Century* (Ithaca, NY, 2016), pp. 167-169.

¹² Koot, *Empire at the Periphery*, pp. 53-56, 66-67.

¹³ See Chapters One and Five of this dissertation.

¹⁴ Koot, *Empire at the Periphery*, pp. 51-53. The English colonies in the Leeward Islands were Antigua, Nevis, Montserrat, and St. Christopher.

¹⁵ Herbert S. Klein & Ben Vinson III, *African Slavery in Latin America and the Caribbean* (Oxford, 1986), pp. 51-54; Wim Klooster, 'The Northern European Atlantic World', in Nicholas Canny and Phillip Morgan, eds, *The Oxford Handbook of the Atlantic World, 1450-1850* (Oxford, 2011), p. 173.

plantation slavery in the English empire. This dissertation will rectify this imbalance by investigating five research questions. Who were the English merchants that financed the Barbados sugar boom? Why did they invest capital in land and enslaved Africans on Barbados in the 1640s, and where did this capital originate? Did an infusion of merchant capital accelerate the process by which the society and economy of Barbados was transformed in the mid-seventeenth century? Did English merchants with Barbadian investments seek to exert control over the governance of the colony in the era of the sugar boom, and if so, were they successful? And where did English merchants reinvest the capital they had generated through sugar and slavery on Barbados?

Methodology and Historiography

To answer my research questions, I place the merchant investors in the sugar boom and their trading networks at the centre of my analysis, bringing together three historiographical strands which are usually studied separately: the history of early modern England, Caribbean history, and global history. This results in a study of Barbados and the merchant financiers of the sugar boom which integrates both the metropolitan and the global, while still remaining sensitive to the transnational dimensions of early modern empires.

This approach draws upon elements of J. G. A. Pocock's project to develop an expansive 'new British history',¹⁶ but has above all been inspired by practitioners of 'new imperial history'. New imperial historians have moved away from traditional mercantilist depictions of empire by decentring the metropole from their analyses, recovering subaltern voices, and interrogating empire through the lenses of gender and race. Of particular relevance for this project is the emphasis new imperial historians have placed on how overseas expansion was a reciprocal process, and that the empire therefore had a

¹⁶ J. G. A. Pocock, 'British history: a plea for a new subject', *Journal of Modern History*, Vol. 47 (1975), pp. 601-624; David Armitage, 'Greater Britain: A Useful Category of Historical Analysis?', *The American Historical Review*, Vol. 104, No. 2 (1999), pp. 427-445.

significant impact on the development of British culture and national identity.¹⁷ Susan Dwyer Amussen and Catherine Hall, for instance, have both developed an interpretative framework for the study of empire which is responsive to the fact that ‘the histories of colony and metropole need to be placed in one analytic frame, as separate histories that are deeply intertwined’.¹⁸ I have adopted a similar framework, but seek to modify it slightly by bringing a global perspective to bear on my analysis. This study investigates how social and economic developments on Barbados in the mid-seventeenth century were shaped not just by forces at work in the metropole and the colony itself, but by England’s interactions with parts of the world beyond the Caribbean. William Pettigrew’s concept of ‘corporate constitutionalism’, which brings the global and local settings of seventeenth-century corporate activity into dialogue, has thus also proved influential.¹⁹

My approach has likewise developed out of a reaction to how Atlantic history has been practised in recent years. Since the 1990s Atlantic historians have produced an excellent body of scholarship which transcends the restrictive national and imperial boundaries that characterised much of the traditional historiography. Our understanding of the process of European expansion has been enriched by the emphasis they have placed on the transnational and inter-imperial dimensions of early modern empires.²⁰ While I deeply admire, and have drawn heavily upon, the scholarship produced by Atlanticists, an Atlantic approach was not useful as an interpretative framework for answering my research questions in this project. This is because my questions demanded that I interrogate both the metropolitan and the global aspects of the business activities conducted by merchant investors in the Barbados sugar boom. For example, to better understand why merchants invested so much capital into the development of a sugar

¹⁷ For examples of the traditional mercantilist depiction of empire, which characterised so much of ‘old’ imperial history, see George Louis Beer, *Origins of the British Colonial System, 1578-1660* (New York, 1908); Lawrence Harper, *The English Navigation Laws: A Seventeenth-century Experiment in Social Engineering* (New York, 1964). For a succinct description of what new imperial historians seek to do differently, see Kathleen Wilson, ‘Introduction: histories, empires, modernities’, in Kathleen Wilson, ed., *A New Imperial History: Culture, Identity, and Modernity in Britain and the Empire, 1660-1840* (Cambridge, 2004), pp. 1-26.

¹⁸ For this quote, see Susan Dwyer Amussen, *Caribbean Exchanges: Slavery and the Transformation of English Society, 1640-1700* (Chapel Hill, 2007), p. 11. See also: Catherine Hall, *Civilising Subjects: Metropole and Colony in the English Imagination, 1830-1867* (Chicago, 2002), p. 9.

¹⁹ William A. Pettigrew, ‘Corporate Constitutionalism and the Dialogue between the Global and Local in Seventeenth-Century English History’, *Itinerario*, Vol. 39, No. 3 (2016), pp. 487-501.

²⁰ For a succinct description of the typologies underpinning Atlantic history, see Bernard Bailyn, *Atlantic History: Concept and Contours* (Cambridge, Mass., 2005). For the various types of approaches which fall under the remit of ‘Atlantic history’, see David Armitage, ‘Three Concepts of Atlantic History’, in David Armitage and Michael J. Braddick, eds, *The British Atlantic World, 1500-1800* (Basingstoke and New York, 2002), pp. 13-29.

industry on Barbados, this dissertation will investigate how metropolitan politics, and the English Civil War in particular, influenced the investment decisions taken by merchants in the 1640s. Moreover, to address where the capital used to finance the sugar boom originated, it will also explore the trading ventures undertaken by London merchants to other parts of the globe, including the East Indies and Levant.

Unlike early Americanists, who have wholeheartedly embraced Atlantic history, very few historians who were trained principally as historians of early modern England have adopted an Atlantic approach.²¹

Inattention to how the sweeping changes which England experienced during the seventeenth century were felt in the colonies and impacted the process of overseas expansion means that many historians of the English Atlantic world are not being 'fully Atlantic' in their studies, much to their detriment.²²

Moreover, despite the efforts of some historians - most notably Peter Coclanis, Alison Games, and Philip Stern - to encourage Atlanticists to read historiographies and conduct research in archives which relate to societies beyond the Atlantic basin, not enough historians of the English Atlantic world have taken up this challenge and put their work into global perspective.²³ This is surprising, because scholars of the Dutch and Portuguese empires routinely explore the interconnections between Europe, America, Africa, and Asia in the early modern period.²⁴ It is because most Atlanticists do not situate their work in a metropolitan and global context that this dissertation takes an approach which is inspired more by new imperial history than Atlantic history.

²¹ There are some notable exceptions, however. For examples, see Michael J. Braddick, *State Formation in Early Modern England, c. 1550-1700* (Cambridge, 2000), ch. 9; Philip Withington, *Society in Early Modern England: The Vernacular Origins of Some Powerful Ideas* (Cambridge, 2010), ch. 7; Steve Pincus, 'Rethinking Mercantilism: Political Economy, the British Empire, and the Atlantic World in the Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries', *The William and Mary Quarterly*, Vol. 69, No. 1 (2012), pp. 3-34.

²² There have, however, been some recent Atlantic histories which engage well with the historiography of early modern England. For examples, see Pestana, *The English Atlantic in an Age of Revolution*; Donoghue, *Fire Under the Ashes*; Philip Stern and Carl Wennerlind, eds, *Mercantilism Reimagined: Political Economy in Early Modern Britain and its Empire* (Oxford, 2014).

²³ Peter A. Coclanis, 'Atlantic World or Atlantic/World?', *The William and Mary Quarterly*, Vol. 63, No. 4 (2006), pp. 725-742; Alison Games, 'Atlantic History: Definitions, Challenges, and Opportunities', *The American Historical Review*, Vol. 111, No. 3 (2006), pp. 741-757; Phillip J. Stern, 'British Asia and British Atlantic: Comparisons and Connections', *The William and Mary Quarterly*, Vol. 63, No. 4 (2006), pp. 693-712.

²⁴ E.g. Francisco Bethencourt and Diogo Ramada Curto, *Portuguese Oceanic Expansion, 1400-1800* (Cambridge, 2007); Marcus Vink, "'The World's Oldest Trade': Dutch Slavery and Slave Trade in the Indian Ocean in the Seventeenth Century", *Journal of World History*, Vol. 14, No. 2, (2003), pp. 131-177.

This study of the merchant financiers of the Barbados sugar boom engages with three main historiographical debates. First, is scholarship on the colonial development of Barbados from the 1620s to the 1670s. Second, is the debate over the sources of capital used to finance the development of the sugar industry in the English Caribbean. Third, is the involvement of London merchants in English politics and government during the mid-seventeenth century. This section will outline each of these historiographical debates, before explaining how the research undertaken in this dissertation advances or modifies our current understanding of these topics.

Following the publication of Eric Williams' provocative *Capitalism and Slavery* in 1944, a large part of Caribbean historiography has focused on testing Williams' thesis about the role played by plantation slavery in the development of British capitalism and the industrial revolution.²⁵ Beginning in the 1970s, however, a generation of scholars began to ask a different set of questions, and sought to try to recapture the lived experience of planters, indentured servants, and enslaved Africans by writing social histories of the British Caribbean in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. Elsa Goveia's study of slave society in the Leeward Islands and Richard Dunn's magisterial investigation into the growth of the English planter class were followed up by social histories written by Hilary Beckles, Carl and Roberta Bridenbaugh, Trevor Burnard, Natalie Zacek, and most recently Jenny Shaw.²⁶ At around the same time there was also a growth in economic histories of the seventeenth-century 'sugar revolution'. Matthew Edel, Richard Sheridan, William Green, and Barry Higman have all compiled quantitative data and used methods of

²⁵ Eric Williams, *Capitalism and Slavery* (Chapel Hill, 1944). For examples Caribbean historians who have engaged heavily with the Williams thesis, see Sheridan, *Sugar and Slavery*; Blackburn, *The Making of New World Slavery*; S. D. Smith, *Slavery, Family and Gentry Capitalism in the British Atlantic: The World of the Lascelles, 1648-1834* (Cambridge, 2006). In recent years, the 'new history of capitalism' has given some of Williams' ideas a new lease of life, because its proponents argue vigorously for the importance of slavery to the development of both financial and industrial capitalism in the antebellum United States. E.g. Walter Johnson, *River of Dark Dreams: Slavery and Empire in the Cotton Kingdom* (Cambridge, MA, 2013); Edward E. Baptist, *The Half Has Never Been Told: Slavery and the Making of American Capitalism* (New York, 2014); Sven Beckert, *Empire of Cotton: A Global History* (London, 2014).

²⁶ Elsa Goveia, *Slave Society in the British Leeward Islands at the End of the Eighteenth Century* (New Haven, 1965); Dunn, *Sugar and Slaves*; Carl and Roberta Bridenbaugh, *No Peace Beyond the Line: The English in the Caribbean, 1624-1690* (New York, 1972); Beckles, *White Servitude and Black Slavery*; Trevor Burnard, *Mastery, Tyranny & Desire: Thomas Thistlewood and his slaves in the Anglo-Jamaican World* (Chapel Hill, 2004); Natalie Zacek, *Settler Society in the English Leeward Islands, 1670-1776* (Cambridge, 2010); Jenny Shaw, *Everyday Life in the Early English Caribbean: Irish, Africans, and the Construction of Difference* (Athens, GA, 2013).

statistical analysis to further our understanding of the social and economic impact of the transition to sugar cane monoculture in the Caribbean.²⁷

Studies of the early modern Caribbean have proliferated in recent years. Over the past decade historians of the North American colonies with an interest in an expansive Atlantic history have looked to the Caribbean islands for new source material and novel perspectives. Innovative new studies have been published which have begun to undermine the Anglocentric bias in the literature by drawing upon Spanish, Portuguese, French, Dutch, and Danish sources.²⁸ Another important development is the emphasis which scholars are now placing on how indigenous agency was far more substantial in shaping Caribbean societies and economies than previously understood.²⁹

Barbados occupies a prominent place in this literature because it is commonly identified as the location where the Caribbean sugar boom first began. Indeed, due to the foundational importance of the sugar boom, historians have been interested in early Barbadian history for centuries. It is because of this wide-ranging body of scholarship that we have a thorough understanding of the social structure, economy, demography, government, and environment of early Barbados.³⁰ Until recently, historians agreed that the introduction of sugar cane to Barbados during the 1640s precipitated a 'sugar revolution' that brought transformative social and economic changes to the island, including African slavery and the plantation

²⁷ Edel, 'The Brazilian Sugar Cycle'; Sheridan, *Sugar and Slavery*; Green, 'Supply versus Demand in the Barbadian Sugar Revolution'; Higman, 'The sugar revolution'; Menard, *Sweet Negotiations*.

²⁸ For examples of this new research on the transnational dimensions of the early modern Caribbean, see: Trevor Burnard and John Garrigus, *The Plantation Machine: Atlantic Capitalism in French Saint-Domingue and British Jamaica* (Philadelphia, 2016); David Wheat, *Atlantic Africa and the Spanish Caribbean, 1570-1640* (Chapel Hill, 2016); Ernesto Bassi, *An Aqueous Territory: Sailor Geographies and New Granada's Transimperial Greater Caribbean World* (Durham, N.C., 2017); Pablo F. Gómez, *The Experiential Caribbean: Creating Knowledge and Healing in the Early Modern Atlantic* (Chapel Hill, 2017); L. H. Roper, ed., *The Torrid Zone: Caribbean Colonization and Cultural Interaction in the Long Seventeenth Century* (Columbia, 2018); Molly A. Warsh, *American Baroque: Pearls and the Nature of Empire, 1492-1700* (Chapel Hill, 2018).

²⁹ E.g. Brett Rushforth, *Bonds of Alliance: Indigenous and Atlantic Slavery in New France* (Chapel Hill, 2012); Carolyn Arena, 'Indian Slaves from Guiana in Seventeenth-Century Barbados,' *Ethnohistory*, Vol. 64, No. 1 (2017), pp. 65-90; Tessa Murphy, 'Kalinago Colonizers: Indigenous People and the Settlement of the Lesser Antilles,' in Roper, ed., *The Torrid Zone*, pp. 17-30.

³⁰ E.g. Richard Ligon, *A true & exact history of the island of Barbados* (London, 1657); Nicholas Darnell Davis, *The Cavaliers & Roundheads of Barbados, 1650-1652: With Some Account of the Early History of Barbados* (Georgetown, British Guiana, 1887); Vincent T. Harlow, *A History of Barbados, 1625-1685* (New York, 1926); Richard S. Dunn, *Sugar and Slaves*; Sheridan, *Sugar and Slavery*; Puckrein, *Little England*; Hilary McD. Beckles, *White Servitude and Black Slavery in Barbados, 1627-1715* (Knoxville, TN, 1989); Gragg, *Englishman Transplanted*; Menard, *Sweet Negotiations*; Peter Thompson, 'Henry Drax's Instructions on the Management of a Seventeenth-Century Barbadian Sugar Plantation,' *The William and Mary Quarterly*, Vol. 66, No. 3 (2009), pp. 565-604.

system.³¹ It was also widely accepted that English planters were the architects of a 'social disaster' in Barbados because of the excessive mortality rates among colonists, the failure to replicate English family life in the tropics, and the brutality of African slavery.³²

However, in the past 20 years two prominent revisionist histories of early Barbados have been written by Larry Gragg and Russell Menard, which have challenged elements of this established narrative. Gragg has argued that English colonists on Barbados were not the architects of a 'social disaster', but in fact formed settled family units and were responsible for successfully transplanting English institutions such as the Church of England to the island.³³ Menard, on the other hand, has focused his attention on proponents of the 'sugar revolution' hypothesis, arguing that the growth of the plantation system and African slavery on Barbados predated the onset of sugar cultivation. For Menard, sugar merely intensified a process which was already underway.³⁴ It is important to emphasise, however, that although both revisionists, Gragg and Menard disagree on some important points, including when African slavery first became a large-scale institution on Barbados.³⁵ This study builds upon the work of these revisionists to provide new insights into the history of Barbados in the era of the sugar boom.

The current interpretation of Barbadian colonial development from the 1620s to the 1670s, based upon the revisionist scholarship of Menard and Gragg, can be summarised as follows. Barbados was founded as a tobacco-producing colony by Sir William Courteen in 1627. After a disruptive period of political turmoil on the island in the years immediately following colonisation, by the late 1630s Barbadians were some of the first colonists in the English Atlantic world to successfully diversify their production of agricultural export staples away from tobacco monoculture, and therefore enjoyed a period of 'comfortable, if crude, prosperity'.³⁶ This economic dynamism carried over into the 1640s, when the colony underwent a

³¹ For an exposition of the sugar revolution hypothesis, see Matthew Edel, 'The Brazilian Sugar Cycle of the Seventeenth Century and the Rise of West Indian Competition', *Caribbean Studies*, Vol. 9, No. 1 (1969), pp. 24-44; William A. Green, 'Supply versus Demand in the Barbadian Sugar Revolution', *The Journal of Interdisciplinary History*, Vol. 18, No. 3 (1988), pp. 403-418; B. W. Higman, 'The Sugar Revolution', *The Economic History Review*, Vol. 53, No. 2 (2000), pp. 213-236.

³² Dunn, *Sugar and Slaves*, passim.

³³ Gragg, *Englishmen Transplanted*, ch. 1, 4, & 8.

³⁴ Menard, *Sweet Negotiations*, pp. 2-4.

³⁵ Larry Gragg, 'Review of Sweet Negotiations: Sugar, Slavery, and Plantation Agriculture in Early Barbados by Russell R. Menard', *The South Carolina Historical Magazine*, Vol. 108, No. 2 (2007), pp. 169-170.

³⁶ Menard, *Sweet Negotiations*, p. 57.

diversified export boom, of which sugar was only one of several commodities that contributed to wealth creation on the island. Nevertheless, sugar cultivation was undoubtedly the most attractive prospect for Barbadian planters and investors in this decade, because the recent collapse of the Brazilian sugar industry due to warfare in Bahia and Pernambuco had wildly inflated the price fetched by the commodity in European markets.³⁷ Barbados is also understood to have enjoyed *de facto* political independence from the mother country during the 1640s due to the fact that the King, Parliament, and aristocrats with an interest in the Caribbean, such as the Earl of Warwick and the Earl of Carlisle, were distracted by the civil war that was unfolding in England.³⁸

A plantation complex based around sugar production and African slavery emerged rapidly on Barbados during the 1640s, principally because the purchase of fixed-capital expenditures (machinery for grinding sugar, refining equipment, enslaved Africans) was financed by reinvestments from the sale of Barbadian tobacco in the 1630s combined with direct investment and generous extensions of credit provided by London merchants.³⁹ In an argument first proposed by Robert Brenner, but accepted by Menard and Gragg in their revisionist histories, it has been understood that London merchants invested capital created through previous American enterprise, and particularly the profits of the tobacco trade to the North American and Caribbean colonies, into the establishment of the Barbadian sugar industry.⁴⁰ English merchants also supplied large numbers of enslaved Africans to Barbados in the 1640s, although due to the fragmentary nature of the surviving source material there is some debate in the scholarship about when this process began. Menard has extrapolated from correspondence records that as many as 1000 enslaved Africans arrived at Barbados in the 1630s, whereas Gragg's systematic study of Barbadian wills and plantation inventories suggests that very few Africans were present on the island until the mid-1640s.⁴¹

³⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 52; Gragg, *Englishmen Transplanted*, p. 99.

³⁸ Gragg, *Englishmen Transplanted*, p. 42.

³⁹ Menard, *Sweet Negotiations*, ch. 3.

⁴⁰ Robert Brenner, *Merchants and Revolution: Commercial Change, Political Conflict, and London's Overseas Traders, 1550-1653* (Princeton, 1993), p. 162.

⁴¹ Menard, *Sweet Negotiations*, p. 47; Gragg, *Englishmen Transplanted*, p. 119.

By 1650, commodity transactions suggest that sugar was the leading commodity exported by Barbadians,⁴² and in subsequent decades planters introduced a number of innovations to the island's sugar industry which led to productivity gains. For example, the integrated plantation, which improved the efficiency of sugar production by combining the cultivation of sugar and its processing in a single site, is understood to have been pioneered by Barbadians such as James Drax in the mid-1650s.⁴³ The London merchants who financed the sugar boom decided to pull the majority of their capital out of the island following the Restoration, which Menard contends was due to a temporary dip in the sugar market (the price of sugar fell by 70% in Barbados between 1646 and 1661) and the difficulties with managing plantations from afar as an absentee proprietor.⁴⁴ Historians agree that, by the early 1670s, Barbados was the wealthiest and most important colony in the English empire because of its function as a burgeoning centre of plantation production.⁴⁵

Although at first glance this narrative of Barbadian colonial development may seem compelling due to its coherence, many of its specific details are complicated and modified by studying the collective history of the English merchants who financed the sugar boom. For instance, the first part of Chapter One develops an analysis of Sir William Courteen's mercantile career from a broader perspective than other historians, leading to a reinterpretation of why the Courteen merchant syndicate financed the initial colonisation of Barbados in 1627. Tobacco cultivation was not the intrinsic destiny for the colony's economic development: Barbados' strategic location in the Lesser Antilles archipelago was more significant in the decision to settle the island than has previously been appreciated. An English settlement on the island could act as a resupply point in Courteen's existing tobacco trade with the Essequibo colony on the Wild Coast, and in the wider context of the Anglo-Spanish war (1625-1630) could also function as a base for launching privateering assaults against the Spanish Empire. Moreover, an analysis of merchant involvement with Barbados in the pre-sugar era (c.1627-1643) does not provide support for Menard's argument that the island enjoyed an economic boom during the 1630s due to tobacco and cotton

⁴² Menard, *Sweet Negotiations*, p. 18.

⁴³ *Ibid.*, ch. 4 & 5.

⁴⁴ On the declining price of sugar, see Menard, *Sweet Negotiations*, p. 69, Table 15. For the withdrawal of merchant capital, see Menard, *Sweet Negotiations*, pp. 60-61.

⁴⁵ Menard, *Sweet Negotiations*, p. 67; Gragg, *Englishmen Transplanted*, pp. 106-107, 187-188; David Eltis, 'The Total Product of Barbados, 1664-1701', *Journal of Economic History*, Vol. 55, No. 2 (1995), pp. 321-338.

production.⁴⁶ The new evidence presented in Chapter One instead reinforces Larry Gragg's interpretation that the economy of Barbados was largely struggling at this early juncture.⁴⁷ Quantitative and qualitative evidence reveals how the poor-quality tobacco produced by Barbadian planters during the 1630s caused English merchants to prefer trading with other colonies, especially Virginia. This argument is supported through a reconstruction of the voyage of the *Abraham* (1636-37). The vessel's owners originally intended for the *Abraham* to travel to Virginia, but unforeseen circumstances meant that they had to divert to Barbados, and the inferior tobacco they purchased there is partly why the venture did not turn a profit.

The onset of the Barbados sugar boom in the 1640s and 1650s is given sustained attention in this dissertation. My analysis of Barbadian colonial development in these decades provides strong support for Menard and Gragg's revisionist argument that it was English merchants based in the City of London, and not Dutch traders, who financed the sugar boom. In Chapters Two and Three qualitative and quantitative data has been collated into a series of tables to highlight in greater detail than ever before how London merchants speculated heavily in the Barbados land market, were leading suppliers of enslaved Africans to the island, and shipped large quantities of provisions to the colony (especially horses and clothing) in the mid-seventeenth century. This study also shows for the first time how London merchants played a vital role in the development of the integrated plantation on Barbados, the key institutional innovation in the seventeenth-century sugar industry. Merchant capital, in the form of both direct investment and extensions of credit, transformed Barbadian plantations by facilitating the process of land aggregation, rapidly populating plantations with enslaved Africans, and financing the construction of expensive sugar mills and refineries. London merchants such as Maurice Thomson were also working in collaboration with members of the Hartlib Circle in the 1640s and 1650s in the pursuit of more efficient methods of grinding sugar, and I argue that it is therefore no coincidence that plantations owned by these entrepreneurial merchants were among the first to experiment with wind-powered sugar mills in the mid-1650s.

⁴⁶ Menard, *Sweet Negotiations*, ch. 1 & 2.

⁴⁷ Gragg, *Englishmen Transplanted*, pp. 89-92, 98. This interpretation was also common among pre-revisionist scholars. E.g. Dunn, *Sugar and Slaves*, p. 49.

There are some elements of the existing revisionist narrative of Barbadian colonial development in the 1640s and 1650s that require modification, however. For example, a prosopographical analysis of the 23 key merchant financiers of the Barbados sugar boom is developed in Chapter Two, which reveals how these merchants were involved in a variety of other overseas enterprises immediately prior to investing in the Barbadian plantation system, including the American tobacco trade, West African commerce, the East India Company, the Levant Company, the cloth trade to Northern Europe and France, and the Brazilian sugar trade. Brenner's argument that capital created through previous American enterprise was used to finance the development of the Barbadian sugar industry does not, therefore, tell the full story. In fact, a prosopographical approach highlights how the capital used to finance the growth of the plantation system on Barbados was sourced from a much broader range of overseas commercial activities than previously understood, and that this capital therefore had global origins.

In Chapter Two I also reassess *why* English merchants chose to invest such large sums of money in land and enslaved Africans on a distant tropical island during the 1640s. Previous explanations have emphasised how the recent decline in Brazilian sugar production meant that English merchants could expect their investments in the Barbadian sugar industry to rapidly appreciate in value.⁴⁸ This argument is broadly correct, but also possesses some deficiencies because it is entirely American-focused. A more nuanced understanding of the decision-making process behind merchant investment in Barbados can be developed by drawing upon the historiography of early modern England, which has been neglected by scholars of Caribbean history in recent years. The merchant financiers of the sugar boom were, after all, mostly absentee investors, and so it is logical that the political and economic situation in England would have had an impact on their investment decisions. Merchant investment in the Barbadian sugar industry was heavily dependent on timing. External political and economic circumstances unique to the 1640s, including not only the commercial opportunity presented by the collapse of the Brazilian sugar industry but also the English Civil War, influenced the investment decisions made by London merchants. The political and economic uncertainty caused by the Civil War caused English merchants to diversify their business portfolios. Central to my argument is how merchants increasingly began to look overseas for a

⁴⁸ E.g. Menard, *Sweet Negotiations*, p. 52; Gragg, *Englishmen Transplanted*, p. 99.

more secure outlet to invest their capital during the 1640s. For example, London merchants invested heavily in land overseas by participating in the Irish Adventurers Scheme and by directly purchasing plantations on Barbados. English merchants thought that investing in a Caribbean island which possessed geographical safeguards against the usual risks to colonial enterprise, and whose inhabitants repeatedly professed a neutral stance in the Civil War, represented a more secure investment than keeping their capital in war-torn England.

Moreover, studying the trading activities of the London merchants who financed the sugar boom does not lend support to the traditional argument that Barbados enjoyed virtual independence from England during the 1640s due to the political disruption caused by the Civil War.⁴⁹ Chapters Three and Four demonstrate that, although some members of the landed gentry were indeed preoccupied by English politics in this decade, London's community of overseas traders did not cease their commercial and political involvement with Barbados like is often supposed. In fact, English merchant investment in Barbadian land and the trade in provisions and unfree labour to the colony intensified during the 1640s. It is an overstatement to say that Barbados was entirely free from metropolitan influence at a time when Barbadian colonists were becoming increasingly dependent on the London credit market and absentee English merchants were rapidly aggregating land on the island.

This dissertation also provides new insights into the process by which London merchants withdrew their capital from Barbados. Although Menard recognised that merchants pulled their money out of the Barbadian land market in the early 1660s,⁵⁰ he failed to appreciate that one of the main reasons why this occurred was because London merchants had recently failed in their efforts to exert centralised control over the governance of Barbados, which given the tumultuous nature of Barbadian politics, placed their investments at risk. Nor did Menard attempt to explore where the merchant financiers of the sugar boom reinvested their capital. The analysis developed in the first part of Chapter Five follows merchant careers to highlight how merchants reinvested the profits of Barbadian sugar in the Jamaican economy, the joint stock of overseas trading companies such as the Royal African Company and the East India Company,

⁴⁹ Gragg, *Englishmen Transplanted*, p. 42.

⁵⁰ Menard, *Sweet Negotiations*, pp. 60-61.

and the accounts of English goldsmith-bankers. The withdrawal of merchant capital from Barbados after the Restoration also had important ramifications for the future organisation of Caribbean trade and finance that have hitherto gone unnoticed. It led to a more pronounced division of labour between merchants and planters and thereby facilitated the rise of the commission system of merchandising, which was the principal means of organising Caribbean commerce until Abolition nearly 200 years later.

Most historians, including revisionists such as Menard and Gragg, focus on the role of Barbados as a site of plantation production within the English empire.⁵¹ This has inadvertently reinforced traditional mercantilist theories of empire, which emphasise how the sole purpose of colonial dependencies such as Barbados was to produce raw materials for the metropole and to provide a captive market for English manufactures. The analysis developed in the second part of Chapter Five takes us beyond this restrictive mercantilist focus by addressing how the sugar boom transformed Barbados' role within the structure of England's empire. The expansion of the colony's own resident merchant community in response to the consumer demand created by the sugar boom meant that the island had become a regional centre for transnational trade in the Caribbean by the 1660s. A community of Sephardic merchants relocated to the island, Bridgetown began to function as an important port in the re-export trade in enslaved Africans to Spanish America, and Barbados also became a nursery for further colonial expansion in the Greater Caribbean. It is therefore clear that the English empire had two core regions in the 1660s: London and Barbados. This highlights how there are major deficiencies with rigid mercantilist depictions of empire that focus solely on metropolitan cores and colonial peripheries, and therefore neglect to recognise that some colonies, such as Barbados in the 1660s, could function as core regions themselves.

This study of merchant capital investment into Barbados in the mid-seventeenth century also contributes to a broad historiographical discussion about the relative importance of English capital to the economic development of the Caribbean sugar colonies. In *The Wealth of Nations* (1776), Adam Smith argued that

⁵¹ Menard, *Sweet Negotiations*, p. 67; Gragg, *Englishmen Transplanted*, pp. 106-107, 187-188.

‘the stock which has improved and cultivated the sugar colonies of England has, a great part of it, been sent out from England, and has by no means been altogether the produce of the soil and industry of the colonists’. He concluded, therefore, that ‘the prosperity of the English sugar colonies has been, in a great measure, owing to the great riches of England, of which a part has overflowed, if one may say so, upon those colonies’.⁵² John Stuart Mill concurred in *The Principles of Political Economy* (1848), where he suggested that ‘Our West India colonies, for example, cannot be regarded as countries with a productive capital of their own...All the capital employed is English capital’.⁵³

Richard Pares was the first to challenge this assumption in his posthumous publication *Merchants and Planters* (1960), in which he argued for the importance of reinvestments of the proceeds of plantation production to the economic development of the Caribbean colonies. For Pares, the ‘wealth of the West Indies was created out of the profits of the West Indies themselves’.⁵⁴ In her influential 1986 *Economic History Review* article, Nuala Zahedieh launched a similar attack on Adam Smith by carefully documenting how locally-generated revenue was of more significance than capital supplied by merchants in the metropole to the economic development of early English Jamaica.⁵⁵ R. C. Nash has supported the arguments advanced by Pares and Zahedieh in his excellent overview of transatlantic commerce and finance in the British empire.⁵⁶ However, S. D. Smith has sought to revive Adam Smith’s interpretation by suggesting that eighteenth-century London commission agents offered large loans to Caribbean sugar planters which accelerated Jamaican economic development after 1730.⁵⁷ Menard has attempted to bridge the gap between these two traditions by arguing that it was a combination of merchant capital and

⁵² Adam Smith, *An Inquiry into the Nature and Causes of the Wealth of Nations*, A Careful Reprint of Edition (3 Volumes, 1812) with notes by J. R. McCulloch, ed., p. 463.

⁵³ John Stuart Mill, *Principles of Political Economy with some of their applications to social philosophy Vol. II* (7th ed., London, 1871), p. 249.

⁵⁴ Richard Pares, *Merchants and Planters* (Cambridge, 1960), p. 50.

⁵⁵ Nuala Zahedieh, ‘Trade, Plunder, and Economic Development in Early English Jamaica, 1655-89,’ *The Economic History Review*, Vol. 39, No. 2 (1986), pp. 205-222.

⁵⁶ R. C. Nash, ‘The Organization of Trade and Finance in the British Atlantic Economy, 1600-1830’, in Peter A. Colcanis, ed., *The Atlantic Economy during the Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries: Organization, Operation, Practice, and Personnel* (Columbia, SC, 2005), pp. 95-151.

⁵⁷ S. D. Smith, ‘Merchants and Planters Revisited’, *The Economic History Review*, Vol. 55, No. 3 (2002), pp. 434-465.

reinvestments from local plantation production that financed the rise of the plantation system in mid-seventeenth-century Barbados.⁵⁸

This dissertation contributes to this discussion by demonstrating how the 1640s and 1650s were a period when metropolitan capital supplied by English merchants was crucial in stimulating the development of plantation economies in the Caribbean. It was an infusion of English merchant capital, in the form of both direct investment and generous extensions of credit, that played the most important role in financing the rapid development of a sugar industry and the integrated plantation on Barbados. Chapter Three shows how there is little quantitative evidence to support Menard's assessment that some planters funded the transition to sugar on Barbados by reinvesting profits created locally through the sale of their own tobacco crops.⁵⁹ Instead, the available evidence points towards how Barbadian planters obtained the capital they needed to speculate in the sugar industry by securing a line of credit from London merchants or by participating in mercantile activity themselves.

It is important to establish which source of capital was most important in financing the Barbados sugar boom, because in my estimation this had a strong bearing on why there was so much variation in the timing and speed with which islands in the Caribbean transitioned to a sugar monoculture in the seventeenth century. Historians tend to make sweeping generalisations about how the development of the Caribbean sugar industry was financed in the seventeenth century, without appreciating that there was significant variation between each island due to contingent circumstances.⁶⁰

Geography, environment, differing commercial opportunities, warfare, and English politics were all factors which influenced economic development in the Caribbean during the seventeenth century. In St. Kitts, for instance, repeated invasions by foreign forces due to the proximity of the colony to the French and Kalinago severely stunted the emergence of a mature sugar industry.⁶¹ Piracy and the entrepot trade with Spanish America were both more attractive propositions for accumulating wealth in early English

⁵⁸ Menard, *Sweet Negotiations*, ch. 3.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, pp. 61-66.

⁶⁰ E.g. Nash, 'The Organization of Trade and Finance', pp. 121-127.

⁶¹ Sheridan, *Sugar and Slaves*, 149-160.

Jamaica than sugar planting, and because the colony lay 1000 miles further away from West Africa when compared to colonies in the Lesser Antilles, it was more difficult and expensive for Jamaican planters to procure enslaved Africans.⁶² These circumstances discouraged merchant investment, delaying the emergence of a sugar industry on St. Kitts and Jamaica until the 1680s. This dissertation argues that Barbados, by contrast, possessed a number of environmental and geographical protections against the usual risks to colonial enterprise, and received a massive injection of merchant capital and unfree labour during the 1640s due to the tumultuous political situation in England, which served to stimulate economic development on the island.

It is argued in Chapters Two, Three, and Five that the factors described above had an important influence on whether merchants decided to directly invest in colonial economies and supply prospective planters with credit. In stark contrast to Barbados, other colonies in the English Caribbean did not receive a significant injection of merchant capital in the seventeenth century, probably because investment in Jamaica, St. Kitts, Nevis, Monserrat, and Antigua was a much riskier prospect than Barbados. By necessity, therefore, plantation owners on these islands were forced to reinvest profits generated locally (by cultivating minor staples such as tobacco and cotton, for instance) in order to afford the expensive purchases necessary to set up a sugar plantation, including enslaved Africans and machinery for sugar mills. This was a slow and gradual process, explaining why it took over 30 years longer for a sugar industry and African slavery to emerge in these colonies when compared to Barbados. Without the direct investment and financial support provided by English merchants, the shift to sugar monoculture and African slavery on Barbados would not have been nearly as rapid as it was. Indeed, the depth of merchant involvement with Barbados in the 1640s and 1650s explains why this island was the first among all other islands in the Caribbean to develop a sugar industry and a mature plantation complex.

Put simply, this dissertation contributes to the historiographical debate outlined above by arguing that historians should not generalise about how the development of the sugar industry and the plantation system was financed in the seventeenth-century English Caribbean. The transition to sugar monoculture

⁶² Zahedieh, 'Trade, Plunder and Economic Development'; David Eltis, *The Rise of African Slavery in the Americas* (Cambridge, 2000), pp. 205-206.

on Barbados was funded principally by an injection of English merchant capital, thus explaining why this process was so rapid and historians have been able to speak of a ‘sugar revolution’ or ‘sugar boom’ occurring on the island during the 1640s and 1650s. At most other colonies in the English Caribbean, however, reinvestments from the profits of plantation production and other forms of locally-generated revenue were the main source of finance for the sugar industry from the 1660s to the 1690s, accounting for the much slower rate of economic development in these colonies.

This dissertation also advances our understanding of the involvement of London merchants in English politics and government. When viewed collectively, the scholarship on the merchant community of early modern England produced by Kenneth Andrews, Ralph Davis, Perry Gauci, Richard Grassby, David Hancock, Thomas Leng, and Nuala Zahediah provides an excellent platform for understanding the social structure of the English merchant community, their domestic and overseas business activities, and their involvement in seventeenth-century politics.⁶³ However, these historians have not studied the English merchants who financed the Barbados sugar boom, and have tended to overlook the middle decades of the seventeenth century, preferring instead to focus on the early Stuart era and the period following the Restoration. The scholarship produced by Robert Brenner and L. H. Roper is therefore most pertinent to this project, because they have analysed many of the same merchants (albeit in a context other than Barbados) and have given sustained attention to the 1640s and 1650s.⁶⁴

⁶³ Ralph Davis, *The Rise of the English Shipping Industry in the Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries* (Newton Abbot, 1962); Kenneth R. Andrews, *Trade, Plunder, and Settlement: Maritime Enterprise and the Genesis of the British Empire, 1480-1630* (Cambridge, 1984); Kenneth R. Andrews, *Ships, Money, and Politics: Seafaring and Naval Enterprise in the Reign of Charles I* (Cambridge, 1991); Richard Grassby, *The Business Community of Seventeenth-Century England* (Cambridge, 1995); David Hancock, *Citizens of the World: London Merchants and the Integration of the British Atlantic Community, 1735–1785* (New York, 1995); Nuala Zahediah, ‘Making Mercantilism Work: London Merchants and Atlantic Trade in the Seventeenth Century’, *Transactions Of The Royal Historical Society*, Sixth Series, Vol. 9 (1999), pp. 143-158; Perry Gauci, *The Politics of Trade: The Overseas Merchant in State and Society, 1660-1720* (Oxford, 2001); David Hancock, *Oceans of Wine: Madeira and the Emergence of American Trade and Taste* (Ann Arbor, 2009); Nuala Zahedieh, *The Capital and the Colonies: London and the Atlantic Economy, 1660-1700* (Cambridge, 2010); Tom Leng, ‘Interlopers and Disorderly Brethren at the Stade Mart: Commercial Regulations and Practices Amongst the Merchant Adventurers of England in the Late Elizabethan Period’, *The Economic History Review*, Vol. 69, No. 3 (2016), pp. 823-843.

⁶⁴ Brenner, *Merchants and Revolution*; L. H. Roper, *Advancing Empire: English Interests and Overseas Expansion, 1613-1688* (Cambridge, 2017).

According to Brenner, long-term structural changes in English commerce due to the rise of import-oriented trades to the Levant, East Indies, and the American plantations between 1550 and 1640 produced an assertive class of ‘new merchants’ with a social background outside of London’s mercantile elite. These ‘new merchants’ (typified by Maurice Thomson) traded in the deregulated waters of the Atlantic and chafed at the exclusive privileges enjoyed by ‘company merchants’ in other regions of the world.⁶⁵ In Brenner’s analysis, it was longstanding commercial conflict between these two factions which had simmered for decades that culminated in political revolution in London in 1642. This represented the supposed triumph of the ‘new merchants’ in overthrowing the established City oligarchy which had long been dominated by conservative-minded company merchants. Brenner’s ‘new merchant’ elite were appointed to prominent positions within the Parliamentary financial administration during the 1640s, before allying themselves with the radical independent section of English political society in the second half of the decade and contributing to the establishment of the Commonwealth regime in 1649. The ‘new merchants’ were ascendant under the Commonwealth (1649-53), and exercised power within committees formed to administer government finance, the navy, and the American colonies. From Brenner’s perspective, therefore, ‘new merchants’ directed the formation of Commonwealth policy relating to the forceful reduction of the royalist rebellions in Virginia and Barbados, and pushed through legislation instituting monopoly controls over colonial trade via the Navigation Act (1651).⁶⁶

Brenner was correct to emphasise that there were long-term changes in English commerce in the century after 1550, and that a distinct group of merchants wielded increasing power in governmental institutions between 1642 and 1653. But his attempt to connect the two, and argue that long-term commercial transformations caused a particular group of London merchants to become involved in popular politics and agitate for revolution in the 1640s, is less persuasive.⁶⁷ The research presented in this dissertation suggests that many of the businessmen who Brenner styled as ‘new merchants’ were far more pragmatic

⁶⁵ David Harris Sacks has observed a similar phenomenon occurring in mid-seventeenth-century Bristol. The new opportunities presented by deregulated Atlantic markets led to increased participation of shopkeepers, artisans, and sailors in overseas commerce, much to the consternation of the city’s established merchant elite. David Harris Sacks, *The Widening Gate: Bristol and the Atlantic Economy, 1450-1700* (Berkeley, 1991), p. 263, 267-270.

⁶⁶ Brenner, *Merchants and Revolution*, passim.

⁶⁷ This is not the only study to criticise Brenner’s social analysis of the English merchant community. For examples, see: Edmond Smith, ‘The Networks of the East India Company in Early Modern London, c. 1599-1625’ (PhD dissertation, University of Cambridge, 2015); Roper, *Advancing Empire*, pp. 112-114, 175-177.

than he allowed, and that they did not subscribe to an ideology of free trade.⁶⁸ Merchants such as Maurice Thomson operated outside of corporate monopolies when it suited them, but were also more than willing to work within overseas trading companies when possessing exclusive trading rights could lead to private commercial advantage. For instance, if Brenner had pushed his analysis beyond 1653, he would have seen that many ‘new merchants’ secured appointment to the directorates of chartered companies such as the East India Company and Levant Company in the late 1650s and early 1660s. Brenner’s argument that there was consensus within London’s community of colonial traders concerning the Commonwealth government’s policy to use force to quell the Royalist rebellion on Barbados also requires modification.⁶⁹ An analysis of the petitions submitted by the ‘Barbados merchants’ in the period from 1650-51 reveals how some of the most important merchant financiers of the sugar boom repeatedly urged the Commonwealth government to rethink their forceful approach, because they feared that warfare on the island would cause severe damage to the island’s sugar economy and therefore place their invested capital at risk.

My analysis of the influence wielded by the merchant financiers of the Barbados sugar boom within the Protectorate and Restoration governments, which is presented in Chapter Four, builds upon Brenner’s work in *Merchants and Revolution* by studying the period after the demise of the Commonwealth in 1653. Brenner has demonstrated how Maurice Thomson and his associates fell into disfavour with Cromwell in 1653,⁷⁰ and I argue that a new cluster of merchants, most of whom had invested in the Barbados sugar boom, moved in to take their place as the most powerful merchant group within the English government. It was the wealth generated by Barbadian sugar and African slavery which propelled this network of merchants, centred on Martin Noell, to the top of the London merchant community in the 1650s and early 1660s. They were well represented in civic institutions in London, exerted increasing control over councils and committees formed to administer the American colonies after 1653, received lucrative government contracts to provision the Western Design fleet, and sat on the directorates of several overseas trading companies. To preserve their financial investments in Barbados, this powerful group of

⁶⁸ For the ‘new merchant’ ideology, see Brenner, *Merchants and Revolution*, pp. 169-161, 168-181.

⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 591.

⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, pp. 633-637.

merchants also sought to influence the political direction of the colony. In pursuit of these ends they submitted numerous petitions to Parliament, forming an informal pressure group which constituted a progenitor of the now-infamous West India Interest that lobbied in the eighteenth century to prevent the abolition of the slave trade. Although the capacity of the merchant investors in the sugar boom to affect policy change in Westminster increased over time, they were not particularly successful in extending their reach across the Atlantic to make the local Barbadian government amenable to their interests, despite sustained attempts to control the office of Provost Marshal.

In a recent reinterpretation of the development of the English empire in the seventeenth century, L. H. Roper's has argued that the empire was constructed at the imperial centre by a network of aristocrats and merchants, and that the state had almost no input whatsoever.⁷¹ Evidence presented in Chapters Two, Three, and Four demonstrates how many of these metropolitan figures were crucially important to the onset of the Barbados sugar boom in the 1640s, and that Roper is therefore correct to highlight that the private interests of merchants were a significant motivating factor behind the growth in English colonising activity in the first half of the seventeenth century. However, it is nonetheless clear that Roper's account requires some modification, because the English state became increasingly involved in colonial expansion in the mid-1650s when the Western Design was launched. The state's interest waned in the short term following the spectacular failure of that military campaign, but picked up again after the Restoration. English overseas expansion was also a far messier and more contingent process than Roper's interpretation allows for, and was shaped just as much by the decisions taken by colonists living in the Americas as it was by powerful London merchants. In this respect, the conclusions reached in this dissertation are more in line with Jack P. Greene's analysis, which stresses how the growth of the English empire involved a constant process of negotiation between interest groups in the metropole and the colonies which had conflicting opinions about what the function of the empire was and how it should develop in the future.⁷²

⁷¹ Roper, *Advancing Empire*, passim.

⁷² On 'negotiated empires', see Greene, *Peripheries and Center*; Daniels and Kennedy, eds, *Negotiated Empires*.

Before moving on to outline the sources used in this dissertation, it is also important to state from the outset what this study is *not* going to do. For instance, one consequence of the sugar boom which will not be explored at length in what follows is the impact this event had on the consumption patterns, diet, and health of the inhabitants of early modern England. In the early 1660s Barbadian planters and the merchant financiers of the sugar boom celebrated the role they had played in making sugar a more affordable commodity in English markets.⁷³ Food products sweetened by slave-grown sugar became an increasingly important part of the English diet over the course of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, which had a negative effect on public health. In the early modern period, just like today, sugar was a highly-addictive substance, and consumption of large quantities led to tooth decay.⁷⁴ The increasing availability of sugar in English markets following the mid-seventeenth-century sugar boom also made a central contribution to the ‘consumer revolution’, a transformation in daily rituals, social identities, and consumer markets which several historians have identified as occurring during the early modern period and have suggested was a contributing factor to proto-industrialisation.⁷⁵ Phil Withington has placed many of the new tropical commodities which were incorporated into English society over the course of the seventeenth century into the category of ‘intoxicants’. He contends that the expanding market for intoxicants led to a proliferation in ‘companies’ and ‘societies’ in early modern England and helped to repurpose ‘consumption’ as a term of political economy.⁷⁶ Although this dissertation is sensitive to the significance of sugar to the consumer revolution, what follows is focused primarily upon merchant

⁷³ They emphasised how: ‘before the said Plantacon [Barbados] no Sugars even not the ordinary sort of Muscovadoes Sugars could be bought under £3 10s per hundred[weight]. The said sugars since the said Plantacon hath been sold for lesse then halfe the said price and so all other sorts of Sugars even to the highest and most refined sort proportconably’. TNA, CO 1/15, ff. 61-62, ‘The humble peticon of the Planters, Merchants, Mariners, and Traders in the Island of Barbadoes’, n.d. [c. 1661].

⁷⁴ Sidney W. Mintz, *Sweetness and Power: The Place of Sugar in Modern History* (New York, 1986); Ralph A. Austen and Woodruff D. Smith, ‘Private Tooth Decay as Public Economic Virtue: The Slave-Sugar Triangle, Consumerism, and European Industrialization’, *Social Science History*, Vol. 14, No. 1 (1990), pp. 95-115.

⁷⁵ E.g. Joan Thirsk, *Economic Policy and Projects: The Development of a Consumer Society in Early Modern England* (Oxford, 1978); Jan de Vries, *The Industrious Revolution: Consumer Behaviour and the Household Economy, 1650 to the Present* (Cambridge, 2008).

⁷⁶ Phil Withington, ‘Intoxicants and Society in Early Modern England’, *The Historical Journal*, Vol. 54, No. 3, (2011), pp. 631-657; Phil Withington, ‘Intoxicants and the invention of “consumption”’, *The Economic History Review* (2019).

involvement in the production of Barbadian sugar and the transatlantic sugar trade, not changing patterns of consumer demand in seventeenth-century England.

I will also not be going into detail about the daily lives of enslaved Africans and indentured servants on Barbados. This is because my research questions are focused on the English merchants who financed the sugar boom. It is also partly due to the fact that there is already a voluminous historiography related to unfree labour on seventeenth-century Barbados and the early modern Caribbean more broadly.⁷⁷ Without new source material my ability to make an original contribution to this debate would be limited.

Nevertheless, it is crucial to remember that it was unfree workers who performed the manual labour needed to create the sugar wealth which made the English merchants discussed in this dissertation rich. Each indentured servant and enslaved African transported across the Atlantic on a merchant vessel was an individual person with a name and family. They were compelled to work in brutal conditions on Barbados, often to their death. Although my dissertation will not focus on these men, women, and children, we cannot forget the role they played in this story.

Sources:

In what follows I deploy qualitative and quantitative evidence derived from manuscript and printed sources to build up my analysis. At the core of this study is a database of all the merchant investors in the Barbados sugar boom during the 1640s and 1650s (Table A4, Appendix 2), which was created using source material gathered from archives in the UK, USA, and Barbados. This database is referred to throughout the dissertation, because it enables statistical estimates to be made about the involvement of English merchants with different aspects of the Barbadian economy in the era of the sugar boom. Due to the prevalence of illegal trade in the early Atlantic economy, which mostly went undocumented and is

⁷⁷ For a general overview of servitude and slavery on Barbados, see Beckles, *White Servitude and Black Slavery*; Simon P. Newman, *A New World of Labor: The Development of Plantation Slavery in the British Atlantic* (Philadelphia, 2013), chs. 3, 4, 8, 9; Marisa J. Fuentes, *Dispossessed Lives: Enslaved Women, Violence, and the Archive* (Philadelphia, 2016).

thus forever concealed from historians, it is impossible to comprehensively recapture the contributions made by merchants to the development of plantation slavery on Barbados. Despite these limitations, this database still represents the best effort to date to use empirical evidence to analyse the array of commercial activities undertaken by the English merchants who financed the Barbados sugar boom.

A variety of primary sources are used to develop my argument in Chapter One. But most prominent are correspondence between members of the Hay family (who were trustees of the Earl of Carlisle's patent to the 'Caribbee Isles'), the port books and customs records for London, and the merchant account books associated with the voyage of the *Abraham*. Letters are widely used by historians as qualitative evidence because of their utility in providing insights into personal and business matters which would otherwise be lost. A limitation of almost all correspondence dating to the early modern period, including the Hay Papers, is that not all of the letters that were exchanged have survived, meaning that historians are often only hearing one side of a conversation.⁷⁸ Consequently, I have used quantitative evidence to complement this analysis. The port books are a record of commodities imported into and exported from England, and were created to aid the state in collecting customs duties from overseas trade. They have been mined by historians interested in compiling quantitative data on early modern commerce, and I have studied some of them in Chapter One to investigate the significance of English merchant involvement with Barbados in the pre-sugar era. Though it is important to note that the port books only allow historians to study the volume of *legal* trade. Illicit commerce in contraband goods, which was prevalent in the early modern world, is not represented at all in these records. Unfortunately, few of the London port books remain for the first half of the seventeenth century, and there is no survival at all during the Interregnum (1642-1660) which is the most important period in this study. Equally disappointing is that there are no equivalent records which systematically list imports into and exports out of Barbados until the late seventeenth century. I have therefore been unable to use port books as evidence in the later chapters of this dissertation.

⁷⁸ For historians who have used correspondence to great effect in their studies of early modern commerce and empire, see George F. Steckley, ed., *The Letters of John Paige, London Merchant, 1648-1658* (London, 1984); David Hancock, ed., *The Letters of William Freeman, London Merchant, 1678-1685* (London, 2002).

The private account books kept by merchants and their employees in the seventeenth century are also few and far between. Only one exists for Barbados in the period under consideration in this study, which was kept primarily by Thomas Anthony during the voyage of the *Abraham* (1636-37). Because of the unprecedented insights these double entry account books give into the structure and organisation of transatlantic commerce, it is an invaluable source for understanding how trade with Barbados worked in the first half of the seventeenth century. One issue though is that there are few other extant account books for trade to the American colonies in the same period to compare it with, so we do not have a good understanding of whether the voyage of the *Abraham* was typical or exceptional. Also problematic is the fact that the bookkeeping and arithmetic skills of the merchants who contributed to the upkeep of the account books leave a lot to be desired. For instance, when making calculations from the available data my figures often do not correspond with those reached by contemporaries. This may reveal what the function of account books were for many merchants in this period: a simple list of debits and credits to work out which clients were indebted and by what amount, rather than a way of making sophisticated calculations about profit and loss.⁷⁹

In Chapter Two, qualitative and quantitative evidence is used to conduct a prosopographical investigation into the 23 key merchant financiers of the Barbados sugar boom. Source material such as deeds, mortgages, wills, state papers, depositions provided during cases heard in the High Court of Admiralty and the Mayor's Court of London, merchant correspondence, the records of trading companies, and printed material was studied in order to build up this analysis. I rely in particular on the Barbados deed books in this chapter. These documents are housed at the Barbados National Archives, and if one can decipher their formulaic legal script, it is possible to find invaluable evidence for the social and economic changes which occurred on the island in the seventeenth century. Included within the deed books are deeds of sale, mortgages, and letters granting powers of attorney, which have enabled me to reconstruct how merchants were involved with the economy of Barbados in the era of the sugar boom. The surviving deeds do not form a complete land register, however, and so it is not possible to fully recreate land

⁷⁹ For more on accounting practices in early modern England, see Craig Muldrew, *The Economy of Obligation: The Culture of Credit and Social Relations in Early Modern England* (Basingstoke, 1998), p. 61.

ownership on Barbados in the mid-seventeenth century. Indeed, the passage of time, the humidity of the tropics, and natural disasters have caused a number of the records to degrade. Fortunately, they were meticulously recopied in the nineteenth century, and it is these recopied deed books which are now available for the public to consult when visiting the Barbadian archives. This presents methodological problems for historians, however. Because the original documents are too frail to consult, I have been forced to rely on the recopied deed books, which contain frequent misspellings of names and gaps where words that were illegible to the nineteenth-century scribe should be. Despite these limitations, the deed books are still the best source we have for understanding how the Barbadian economy changed in the 1640s and 1650s, and as such have been used to great effect by revisionist historians such as Russell Menard and Larry Gragg.⁸⁰

I draw heavily upon depositions lodged in the High Court of Admiralty as evidence for my analysis in Chapters Three and Five. The Admiralty Court was, in Richard Blakemore's words, 'a major institution in Britain for punishing seaborne crimes such as piracy, and for resolving disputes between merchants, shipowners, and seafarers'.⁸¹ The court's reliance on written testimony meant that it created a large body of evidence for historians interested in English trade and maritime affairs, especially for the mid-seventeenth century. Historians of the early modern Caribbean, and the American colonies more generally, have not made enough use of the Admiralty Court records. Even though their depositions were mediated by lawyers and scribes, court records produced during cases heard at the High Court of Admiralty do give a voice to the sailors of varying social status who helped to construct the English empire in the Caribbean, which acts as a counterbalance against the fact that a large part of this dissertation concentrates on elite merchants in London.

Petitions submitted by the self-described 'Barbados merchants' are used in Chapter Four as evidence for the existence of an informal pressure group of merchants with Barbadian interests in London. Early modern England was a petitioning society. Submitting petitions was an important channel through which

⁸⁰ Menard, *Sweet Negotiations*; Gragg, *Englishmen Transplanted*.

⁸¹ Richard J. Blakemore, 'West Africa in the British Atlantic: Trade, Violence, and Empire in the 1640s', *Itinerario*, Vol. 39, No. 2 (2015), pp. 299-327.

ordinary people without official political power could voice their opinions and exert pressure on the government to implement policy change. Indeed, the capacity to supplicate to a higher political authority was perceived as an ancient right shared by all freeborn Englishmen. Petitions are therefore a useful source for historians keen to recapture the perspectives of people of lower social status (although in this study the petitions analysed were, for the most part, penned by elite London merchants).⁸² There are several limitations with petitions as a historical source. For instance, petitions are by their very nature persuasive writing, and so historians must be aware that their authors might be exaggerating for effect. And as Blair Worden has warned, we must always be conscious that ‘pieces of paper can temporarily and artificially unite men of very different views’.⁸³ I have been careful, therefore, not to overstate the cohesiveness of this lobby group. The petitions submitted by the ‘Barbados merchants’ show that when these merchants had a problem with the way the colony was being administered they vented their grievances in a relatively organised way to the English government. This is not the same as a unified commercial lobby which campaigned in favour of a consistent set of policies, however. But the evidence contained within these petitions does suggest that there was a thread of political lobbying which linked the ‘Barbados merchants’ of the mid-seventeenth century to the later West India Interest.

Chapter Outlines:

This dissertation is divided into five chapters. Building upon the previous scholarship outlined in the ‘Methodology and Historiography’ section above, these chapters trace how merchant capital was invested in the Barbadian economy during the 1640s, produced transformative social and economic changes on

⁸² For examples of historians of early modern England who have used petitions as a historical source, see Keith Lindley, *Popular Politics and Religion in Civil War London* (Aldershot, 1997); David Zaret, *Origins of Democratic Culture: Printing, Petitions, and the Public Sphere in Early-Modern England* (Princeton, 2000); Derek Hirst, ‘Making Contact: Petitions and the English Republic’, *Journal of British Studies*, Vol. 45, No. 1 (2006), pp. 26-50; Jason Peacey, ‘Print Culture and Political Lobbying during the English Civil Wars’, *Parliamentary History*, Vol. 26, No. 1 (2007), pp. 30-48; David Dean, ‘Public Space, Private Affairs: Committees, Petitions and Lobbies in the Early Modern English Parliament’, in Chris R. Kyle and Jason Peacey, eds, *Parliament at Work: : Parliamentary Committees, Political Power and Public Access in Early Modern England* (Rochester, NY, 2002), pp. 169-180.

⁸³ Blair Worden, *The Rump Parliament, 1648-1653* (Cambridge, 1974), p. 43.

Barbados and in England over the next two decades, before being withdrawn in the 1660s and reinvested elsewhere.

In order to understand the significance of merchant investment in the Barbadian sugar industry during the 1640s, it is first necessary to investigate the colony's social structure and economy in the preceding decade. Therefore, Chapter One begins by exploring the involvement of English and Dutch merchants with Barbados in the pre-sugar era (c.1627-1643). It explores who these merchants were and considers what merchant involvement in Barbadian trade can tell us about the economic health of the colony in the 1630s and early 1640s. The chapter also includes a reconstruction of a merchant venture to Barbados using documents presented as evidence in a court case heard in the High Court of Admiralty relating to the voyage of the *Abraham* (1636-1637).

The origins of the Barbados sugar boom are the focus of Chapter Two. A database of all 254 merchants who were involved in the Barbadian sugar economy in the 1640s and 1650s is used to identify the 23 key merchant financiers of the sugar boom. A prosopographical study of 6 of these investors is then developed in order to highlight the diverse array of domestic and overseas business activities that these merchants participated in, and to identify where the merchant capital used to finance the sugar boom originated. Beyond tracing the careers of the merchant financiers of the sugar boom, this chapter also analyses the motivations behind their heavy investment in the Barbadian plantation system, concluding that it was shaped by two external events unique to the 1640s: the collapse of the Brazilian sugar industry and the English Civil War.

Chapter Three uses correspondence records, wills, deeds, mortgages, petitions, and court cases to document precisely how absentee English merchants contributed to the emergence of a commercial sugar industry on Barbados in the 1640s and 1650s. This analysis reveals how it was London merchants who undertook the capital-intensive work of extending credit to the island's inhabitants, constructing sugar refineries on newly-bought plantations, and supplying the colony with indentured servants, enslaved Africans, and provisions. Chapter Three also includes a discussion of the relative importance of English merchant direct investment and credit in financing the rapid transition to sugar production on Barbados

when compared to forms of locally-generated revenue such as reinvestments from the profits of tobacco cultivation.

Chapter Four investigates whether the commercial dynamism of the Barbadian economy in the 1640s and 1650s encouraged English merchants to try to exert political influence over the governance of the colony. The chapter traces the increasing representation of the merchant financiers of the Barbados sugar boom on the committees and councils formed in Westminster to administer the American plantations and overseas commerce from the 1640s to the 1660s, and analyses how these merchants also sought to protect their investments in the Barbados sugar economy by forming an informal pressure group in London which petitioned the English government when factional strife threatened to destabilise Barbadian politics. In addition, the chapter explores whether London merchants were able to exert political influence within governmental institutions on Barbados itself, concluding that despite sustained efforts to control the office of Provost Marshal merchants in England were never particularly successful in controlling Barbadian politics and government due to their distance from the colony.

Chapter Five studies the ramifications of the Barbados sugar boom in the years immediately following the Restoration of the monarchy in 1660. Besides exploring why merchants decided to withdraw their capital from Barbados and where they reinvested this money, the chapter also details how the economic transformation resulting from the sugar boom facilitated the development of the commission system of merchandising and led to the rise of a local merchant community on Barbados. By the early 1670s Barbados was the most important colony within the English empire, functioning as a site of plantation production, a regional centre of trade, and a nursery for further colonial expansion in the Greater Caribbean.

The dissertation ends in 1672. This was chosen as a stopping point because the commercial and political relationship between English merchants and the Barbadian economy changed fundamentally in 1672 due to the re-structuring of the Royal African Company that year.⁸⁴ Discussing the extensive debates between

⁸⁴ For the Royal African Company, see K. G. Davies, *The Royal African Company* (London, 1957).

merchants and planters over the African Company's monopoly rights to the transatlantic slave trade was beyond the remit of this study.⁸⁵ 1672 was also a significant year in the history of early modern England. The Stop of the Exchequer led to the bankruptcy of several prominent goldsmith-bankers, causing long-lasting changes in the structure of state finance. It was beyond the scope of this PhD dissertation to trace how this seminal event impacted the business activities of the merchants involved in Caribbean trade.

⁸⁵ Two recent books have discussed these debates in detail: William A. Pettigrew, *Freedom's Debt: The Royal African Company and the Politics of the Atlantic Slave Trade, 1672-1752* (Chapel Hill, 2013); Abigail L. Swingen, *Competing Visions of Empire: Labor, Slavery, and the Origins of the British Atlantic Empire* (New Haven, 2015).

Chapter One. Merchant Involvement with Barbados in the Pre-Sugar Era, 1627-1643

The history of Barbados during the pre-sugar era, which stretched from the founding of the colony in 1627 to the beginning of commercial sugar cultivation in 1643, has been scrutinised by historians. It has traditionally been argued that these years constituted an exceedingly difficult time in the history of the island, during which the cultivation of poor-quality tobacco and political dispute over control of Barbados threatened the colony's continued survival. Things remained this way, so the argument goes, until the social and economic transformations wrought by sugar improved the commercial fortunes of the struggling colony.¹ More recently revisionists have challenged aspects of this narrative. Collectively, the work of Robert Carlyle Batie, Alison Games, and Russell Menard presents a picture of 1630s Barbados as a seventeenth-century boomtown, where entrepreneurs profited greatly from the sale of their tobacco crops and time-expired servants benefited from the numerous opportunities for social advancement not available in England. Menard has even gone so far as to argue that the growth of African slavery had begun in the 1630s, long before the emergence of a commercial sugar industry in the colony.²

But by focusing their attention on the experiences of planters living in the colony itself these revisionist historians have not considered what the evidence of merchant involvement with Barbados tells us about the economic and commercial vitality of the island in the pre-sugar era. The first chapter of this dissertation will revisit some of these debates and in the process establish several themes which will become prominent in later chapters. The chapter will use new evidence, and especially the detailed account books of the voyage of the *Abraham* (1636-37) preserved in the High Court of Admiralty records, to seek answers to the following questions. Which merchants had a commercial interest in Barbados

¹ For various versions of this argument see, F. C. Innes, 'The Pre-Sugar Era of European Settlement in Barbados', *Journal of Caribbean History*, Vol. 1 (1970), pp. 1-22; Bridenbaugh, *No Peace Beyond the Line*, ch. 1; Dunn, *Sugar and Slaves*, ch. 2; Sheridan, *Sugar and Slavery*, pp. 394-395; Puckrein, *Little England*, ch. 3.

² Robert Carlyle Batie, 'Why Sugar? Economic Cycles and the Changing of Staples on the English and French Antilles, 1624-54', *The Journal of Caribbean History*, Vol. 8, No. 1 (1976), pp. 1-41; Alison Games, 'Opportunity and Mobility in Early Barbados', in Robert L. Paquette and Stanley L. Engerman, eds, *The Lesser Antilles in the Age of European Expansion* (Gainesville, 1996), pp. 165-81; Menard, *Sweet Negotiations*, ch. 1 & 2.

during the 1630s and early 1640s? Was it mainly English merchants, or were traders of other nationalities more significant to the island's economy? What goods were being traded to Barbados, what were these goods being exchanged for, and what was the importance of credit to business transactions between merchants and planters? Was Menard correct to argue that the Barbadian economy was not suffering a depression during the 1630s like most historians had previously thought?

1. The Origins of Merchant Involvement with Barbados, 1627-1630

The first section of this chapter will explore how merchants in the City of London were involved in the founding of Barbados in 1627 and were granted substantial landholdings on the island. The protracted legal dispute between Sir William Courteen and the Earl of Carlisle over the proprietorship of Barbados is a story which is broadly familiar to historians, and therefore will not be recounted in detail here. This section will instead be concerned with answering several questions related to merchant involvement with early Barbados which have been neglected by historians. Why did the London merchant Sir William Courteen choose to finance the colonisation of Barbados in 1627? And what happened to the 10,000 acres of land granted by the Earl of Carlisle to the merchant syndicate led by Marmaduke Rawdon in 1630?

In 1625 the ship captain John Powell was returning to Europe from a successful trading voyage to Guiana when he stopped off at an uninhabited and thickly wooded tropical island in the eastern Caribbean. Clearly impressed with what he saw during his brief stay, he returned to London and quickly set about gathering business partners to help him finance a colonising expedition. Forming a joint-stock company was common in such endeavours, as it diminished the threat to personal wealth which came with risky overseas ventures. Powell found business partners willing to supply the required capital within his family in the form of his son, also named John Powell, and his brother Henry Powell. But he also managed to

attract the support of a powerful Anglo-Dutch merchant syndicate operating out of the City of London, which had financed his earlier voyage to Guiana, involving Sir William Courteen, his brother Sir Peter Courteen, and their brother-in-law John Mounsey. Philip Herbert, the fourth earl of Pembroke, was another figure working in conjunction with Powell and Courteen. Whether he adventured capital is unknown, but what is certain is that he used his political influence within Charles I's court to try to secure the group a proprietary patent to govern the island. By the end of 1626 they had raised approximately £8000 to outfit the *William and John*, commanded by Capt. Henry Powell, which disembarked 80 passengers at Barbados on 20 February 1627.³

Precisely why leading figures in the London merchant community and a prominent member of the English gentry decided to pool resources and initiate a speculative venture to colonise Barbados is not clear from the surviving source material. But exploring the other trading activities undertaken by these men before their endeavour to settle Barbados helps to place into context the growing commercial interest of English merchants and courtiers in the Lesser Antilles. When the first English settlement was founded on Barbados in 1627, Sir William Courteen led one of the most successful mercantile firms in the City of London. In the mid-1620s his trading empire encompassed the cloth trade in the Baltic, whaling in the Northern seas, the tobacco trade in South America, and the East Asian commerce in calicos and spices. The profits generated by these trading ventures enabled Courteen to become an important government moneylender: in the years before 1626 he had extended credit to the Crown in three instalments worth a total of £50,500.⁴

Of particular significance for understanding Courteen's participation in the colonisation of Barbados was his sustained interest in the tobacco trade on the Wild Coast of Guiana. Under the command of John Powell, Courteen's vessel the *Olive* had already completed several successful voyages to the Dutch colony on the Essequibo River, which were organised in conjunction with Jan de Moor, a merchant of Flushing

³ Trinity College Dublin Library, HM 736, f. 38; Gary Puckrein, 'Did Sir William Courteen Really Own Barbados?', *Huntington Library Quarterly*, Vol. 44, No. 2 (1981), p. 136.

⁴ John C. Appleby, 'Courteen, Sir William (c. 1568-1636), merchant and financier', *ODNB* (23 September 2004) <https://www.oxforddnb.com/view/10.1093/ref:odnb/9780198614128.001.0001/odnb-9780198614128-e-6445> (Accessed 8 November 2019).

(Vlissingen), and several other agents in Amsterdam, Zeeland, and Middelburg.⁵ Such voyages reveal the depth of Anglo-Dutch commercial connections in the first half of the seventeenth century, and the important role that the trading networks forged by English merchants with Brazil and Guiana played in the colonisation of Barbados and other islands in the Lesser Antilles.⁶ It was on the return leg of one of these voyages to Guiana that John Powell first encountered Barbados and identified the island as a suitable site for establishing a permanent English presence in the eastern Caribbean. The Earl of Pembroke also had a diverse business portfolio and was deeply involved in overseas ventures. In 1612 he served on the council of the Virginia Company and was an investor in the North-West Passage Company, before purchasing stock in the East India Company two years later. Like many other gentry investors interested in overseas trade and American colonisation, by the mid-1620s he was increasingly attracted to the commercial opportunities opening up in the Caribbean, and as such became one of the first investors in the Guiana Company in 1626.⁷

What can the wider business portfolios of merchants and courtiers involved in the initial colonisation of Barbados tell us about their motivations for settling this small island in the eastern Caribbean? Most historians have assumed that the principal interest of the Courteen syndicate was to develop Barbados as a new centre of tobacco production.⁸ Extant records of tobacco prices in London and Amsterdam are patchy, but depending on the quality of the leaf, the tobacco produced in Virginia and the recently established colony of St. Christopher (St. Kitts) could fetch prices of up to 36 pence per lb. of tobacco in 1625, generating a tidy profit for planters and merchants.⁹ It was hoped, so the argument goes, that Barbados could emulate the successes of these colonies. Support for this interpretation can be found in

⁵ Appleby, 'Courten, Sir William', *ODNB*; Esther Mijers, 'A Natural Partnership? Scotland and Zeeland in the Early Seventeenth Century', in Allan I Macinnes and Arthur H. Williamson, eds, *Shaping the Stuart World, 1603-1714: The Atlantic Connection* (Leiden, 2006), pp. 245-247.

⁶ London merchants had been importing contraband tobacco produced on Spanish plantations on the banks of the Orinoco River and Trinidad into England long before the settlement of Virginia in 1607. Joyce Lorimer, 'The English contraband tobacco trade from Trinidad and Guiana, 1590-1617' in Kenneth Andrews et al., *The Westward Enterprise: English Activities in Ireland, the Atlantic, and America, 1480-1650* (Liverpool, 1978); Andrews, *Trade Plunder and Settlement*, p. 225.

⁷ David L. Smith, 'Herbert, Philip, first earl of Montgomery and fourth earl of Pembroke (1584-1650), courtier and politician', *ODNB* (23 September 2004), <https://www.oxforddnb.com/view/10.1093/ref:odnb/9780198614128.001.0001/odnb-9780198614128-e-13042> (Accessed 8 November 2019).

⁸ E.g. Innes, 'Pre-Sugar Era', pp. 13-18.

⁹ Batie, 'Why Sugar', p. 29 (Table 1).

the letters of Henry Winthrop, who arrived on Barbados as part of the first fleet of settlers. He wrote to his father in August 1627 to explain how he and his servants had set about planting tobacco, which he expected within three years would prove to be a profitable enterprise. Just six months after the first settlement of Barbados, Winthrop could report that the English colonists already had ‘a crop of tobacco on the gronde’, and that the next time he wrote to England he would be able to ‘send ouer 500 or a Thousand weyght of tobackow’.¹⁰ However, depositions provided by the first settlers of Barbados suggest that the founding party of colonists did not just see tobacco as the key to the colony’s future success, but were instead willing to experiment with a variety of cash crops. After the first settlement of Barbados in 1627, for instance, Henry Powell ventured to Guiana, and returned with an array of seeds and roots for the provision of the English colonists (including indigo and sugar cane), along with 32 Arawak Indians to provide expertise in how best to cultivate these crops.¹¹

Moreover, a colony on Barbados could function as a node in Courteen’s existing trade with the Essequibo plantation, perhaps as a resupply point. It is instructive that the first action taken by Henry Powell after disembarking the founding group of colonists on Barbados was to travel straight to the Essequibo River and seek the assistance of the Dutch governor there named Captain Groenewegen, probably at Courteen’s request. According to a deposition provided by Henry Powell in the 1650s, during his stay in Guiana he left eight men along with a ‘Cargezon of trade for that place’, reinforcing the significance of commerce with the Essequibo plantation to Courteen’s plans for Barbados. If we are to believe Powell’s testimony, the indigenous Arawak Indians were also enthused by the prospect ‘that wee might driue a constant trade between that Iland and the Mayne’.¹²

The wider geopolitical context of the mid-1620s, and especially the outbreak of war with Spain in 1625, suggests there may have been one other motive behind the colonisation of Barbados. Considering how his father was forced to flee the Low Countries in 1568 as a Protestant refugee due to persecution by the

¹⁰ *Winthrop Papers*, Vol. 1., pp. 356-357, Henry Winthrop to Emmanuel Downing, 22 August 1627.

¹¹ Vincent T. Harlow, *Colonising Expeditions to the West Indies and Guiana, 1623-1667* (London, 1924), pp. 37-38.

¹² *Ibid.*, pp. 37-38.

Spanish, it is not surprising that William Courteen repeatedly secured letters of marque to take Spanish prizes when his ships travelled to the Caribbean. There were ongoing discussions about the formation of an English West India Company to assault Spanish America in the 1620s, and other English settlements in the Caribbean such as Providence Island performed a dual function of both plantation colony and privateer base.¹³ It does not, therefore, seem out of the question that the Courteen syndicate could have possessed a similar vision for Barbados.¹⁴ Barbados could have functioned as an ideal base for English privateers to venture out into the Caribbean Sea and prey upon richly laden Spanish treasure fleets, thereby contributing to the ongoing conflict against the Catholic Spaniard in the New World. The island's geography would have supported this military function. As the easternmost island in the Lesser Antilles archipelago Barbados was situated a long distance away from the centre of Spanish power in America, meaning the colony could avoid being extinguished by Spanish invasion in the first years of settlement, when it was at its most vulnerable. Barbados was also a highly defensible island with few landing spots for enemy forces, meaning that a Spanish invasion could be more easily repelled. Support for this interpretation is provided by Henry Powell himself, who stated in a petition how 'in the yeare 1626 being warres between the Kingdome of England and Spaine' he 'procured a Comision against the estate of the Spaniards' before venturing to the Caribbean to settle Barbados. In fact, on the outward voyage Powell even managed to capture a Spanish prize, which contained a contingent of enslaved Africans who arrived on Barbados with the initial colonists.¹⁵

Whatever the role envisioned for Barbados within the Courteen syndicate's wider trading empire happened to be, they would never see it come to fruition. This was because there were competing claims to the ownership of Barbados. Sir James Hay, the first Earl of Carlisle, had received letters patent from Charles I in July 1627 bestowing upon him the title of Lord Proprietor of most of the islands in the Lesser Antilles, including Barbados and St. Christopher. Just seven months later the King granted a

¹³ John C. Appleby, 'An association for the West Indies? English plans for a West India Company, 1621–29', *The Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History*, Vol. 15, No. 3 (1987), pp. 213–41; Kupperman, *Providence Island*.

¹⁴ I must thank Edmond Smith for encouraging me to think about this possibility. Trinity College Dublin Library, HM 736, ff. 38–40; Bodleian Library, Rawlinson Ms. C. 94, also quoted in Harlow, *Colonising Expeditions*, pp. 36–42; Andrews, *Trade Plunder and Settlement*, pp. 244–5; Appleby, 'Sir William Courteen', *ODNB*.

¹⁵ Harlow, *Colonising Expeditions*, p. 36.

similar patent to the Earl of Pembroke, acting on behalf of Courteen and his business associates, which to the consternation of the Earl of Carlisle also named Barbados. The story of how these competing patents generated confusion in London and conflict on Barbados is long and convoluted, and does not need repeating in detail here.¹⁶ What is more interesting for our purposes is that Carlisle was working in conjunction with a group of London merchants to secure his proprietary title to Barbados. Living an extravagant lifestyle as a favoured member of James I's court meant the Earl of Carlisle owed considerable debts to a group of moneylending merchants in the City of London.¹⁷ To go some way towards repaying his debts, Carlisle granted land on Barbados to nine of his merchant creditors.¹⁸ Marmaduke Rawdon, William Perkins, and Alexander Bannister were the leading members of this syndicate. In April 1628 these merchants chose Charles Wolverston to act as their agent, and drafted a commission in conjunction with the Earl of Carlisle giving him the power to administer their affairs on Barbados and govern those persons they sent over to work on their plantation.¹⁹ Wolverston arrived on Barbados in June 1628 and immediately ordered the 80 men who accompanied him to begin cultivating tobacco for their merchant employers. This tobacco plantation is the first example we have of absentee London merchants directly owning land on Barbados, something that will become a prominent theme later in this dissertation.

Initially, things seemed to be going well for the Rawdon syndicate's tobacco business. By 1629 it looked like their first crop would produce 60,000 lb. of tobacco, worth approximately £1000 in England. But disputes over proprietary control of the island, which eventually spilled over into violence, disrupted all the progress Wolverston had made towards growing tobacco on behalf of the merchants. According to a bill of complaint lodged in the High Court of Chancery by the Earl of Carlisle and his merchant

¹⁶ For a detailed analysis of these competing proprietary claims to Barbados and the events which followed, see James A. Williamson, *The Caribbean Islands under the Proprietary Patents* (Oxford, 1926), ch. 2 & 3; Puckrein, 'Did Sir William Courteen Really Own Barbados?'

¹⁷ Roy E. Schreiber, 'Hay, James, first earl of Carlisle (c. 1580–1636), courtier and diplomat', *ODNB* (23 September 2004), <https://www.oxforddnb.com/view/10.1093/ref.odnb/9780198614128.001.0001/odnb-9780198614128-e-12723> (Accessed 8 November 2019); Roy E. Schreiber, 'The First Carlisle: Sir James Hay, First Earl of Carlisle as Courtier, Diplomat and Entrepreneur, 1580-1636', *Transactions of the American Philosophical Society*, Vol. 74, No. 7 (1984), pp. 1-202.

¹⁸ These merchants were: Marmaduke Rawdon, William Perkins, Alexander Bannister, Robert Wheatley, Edmond Forster, Robert Swinnerton, Henry Wheatley, John Sharpes, and John Farrington.

¹⁹ Huntington Library, HM 17, 'The Earle of Carlisle's Commission granted to Charles Wolverston to be Governor of the Marchants Plantations, 3 April 1628'.

associates in September 1629, John Powell the younger had declared himself governor of the entire island on behalf of Sir William Courteen some months earlier, and had subsequently ‘destroyed their tobacco plants and other merchandizes then by them planted wch would have been ripe and readie to be reaped’.²⁰ Wolverston was forced to flee the island and return to England, where he provided a dire report on the extent of the merchants’ losses. He explained that because he had to keep a constant guard against the incursions made by Courteen’s settlers ‘great part of the store & provisions which the Merchants sent was consumed’, rather than going towards supplying their servants for the next 18 months. If they did not furnish their plantation with extra provisions soon, Wolverston warned, then it was likely that the entire business venture would collapse, meaning that the Rawdon syndicate would lose the £5000 they had adventured to get their tobacco plantation operational.²¹ In response to this affront, the Earl of Carlisle dispatched Captain Henry Hawley to be his new governor, who armed with a letter from the King, promptly imprisoned Powell and re-established Carlisle’s control over Barbados.²²

With his proprietary authority reinstated, the Earl of Carlisle moved to compensate his merchant creditors, whose prior Barbadian venture had been a financial disappointment. On 22 February 1630 Carlisle allocated 10,000 acres of land in the parishes of St. Michael and St. George to Marmaduke Rawdon, William Perkins, Alexander Bannister, and the rest of their merchant associates. The only condition was that they set aside five percent of the annual revenue from the plantation for the Earl of Carlisle’s use as proprietor.²³ Other than the fact that the land was granted, and that the ‘tenne Thousande Acres of Lande which Belongeth to the Merchants of London’ forms the centrepiece of Richard Ligon’s famous map (see Figure 1.1, below), historians know surprisingly little about what subsequently happened to the Rawdon syndicate’s large plantation. No correspondence between the merchants and their agents on Barbados has survived. The piecemeal evidence we have at our disposal indicates that some of the merchants were legitimately bought-out of their land by their factors living on Barbados. In May 1638, for example, Edward Oistin explained in a letter to Archibald Hay how ‘this land was once the marchants and

²⁰ Williamson, *The Caribbee Islands*, Appendix 1.

²¹ Huntington Library, HM 17, ‘Capt Wolverston’s declaracon of the Merchant’s Losses’.

²² Puckrein, ‘Did Sir William Courteen Really Own Barbados?’, p. 144-5.

²³ Huntington Library, HM 17, ‘The Earl of Carliles grant of 10000 Acres of Land to the Merchantes’, February 22 1629/30, in the Papers of James Hay, 1st Earl of Carlisle.

I their factor there', and that he later 'bought them out and gave them one thousand pounds sterling money in England'.²⁴

There is also strong evidence to suggest that the Rawdon syndicate's 10,000-acre plantation was mismanaged throughout the 1630s and 1640s, and that at least some of their profits were embezzled.²⁵ Sir George Hastings penned a letter to Archibald Hay in February 1641 'concerning the ten thousand akars of land belonging to the Londinars Plantation granted by my Lord of Carlisle'. He wrote indignantly that 'wee have bine much wronged by som we trusted, who have sold most, if not all of our lands, and given us no account'.²⁶ These accusations of corruption were almost certainly aimed at James Holdip, the agent entrusted with managing the Rawdon syndicate's 10,000 acres. Holdip had previously served as a factor for Marmaduke Rawdon in various French port towns, co-ordinating the cloth trade there on behalf of the Company of Merchants Trading to France.²⁷ By 1630 Holdip was on Barbados in Rawdon's employ. Over the course of the 1630s James Holdip used the power and influence conferred by his governance of the 10,000 acres and the public office of Receiver General to become a major Barbadian landowner.²⁸ Much of his Locust Hall plantation, for instance, was embezzled from his merchant employers. Holdip also fraudulently sold some of the land contained within the merchant's 10,000-acre plot: prior to 1660 he was involved in 27 Barbadian land transactions, and was the seller in each case.²⁹

²⁴ NRS, Hay Papers, GD34/923/13, Edward Oistin to Archibald Hay, 29 May 1638.

²⁵ John Oldmixon, *The British Empire in America, Containing the History of the Discovery, Settlement, Progress and State of the British Colonies on the Continent and Islands of America, Volume II: On the West Indies Colonies* (London, 1708), p. 7.

²⁶ NRS, Hay Papers, GD34/923/18, Sir George Hastings to Archibald Hay, 6 February 1640/41.

²⁷ Eric Otremba, 'Inventing ingenios: experimental philosophy and the secret sugar-makers of the seventeenth-century Atlantic', *History and Technology*, Vol. 28, No. 2 (2012), pp. 133-134, 136-137.

²⁸ The position of Receiver General gave Holdip the power to collect rent payments for the Earl of Carlisle. Huntington Library, HM 17, 'The Earle of Carliles Pattent unto Capt James Holdip sent him by the Phenix of London', February 12 1629/30.

²⁹ Otremba, 'Inventing Ingenios', pp. 136-137.

commissioned by Governor Bell several years earlier. What the document demonstrates is that, in 1644, 23 different men owned 30 plantations of varying sizes within Bannister's plot of 3425 acres (Table 1.1, below). Only William Perkins, who possessed one of the largest plantations of 500 acres, was a merchant named in the Earl of Carlisle's original land grant. The rest, one must assume, were squatters who fraudulently purchased the land from James Holdip. A copy of the list, which survives in the London Metropolitan Archives, was drafted by a scrivener in 1653 before John Bannister went to Barbados to try to reclaim his brother's rightful estate. But being unable to proffer a 'principall writing' to support his claim meant that he 'could make no effectuall progress therein'. The outcome of a suit subsequently heard in the Mayor's Court of London in March 1656 relating to this dispute is unknown. But it is unlikely there was a decisive ruling, because even in the mid-eighteenth century legal hearings were still being pursued by the heirs of the Rawdon syndicate, who were eager to receive compensation for being swindled out of their inheritance.³¹

³¹ See, for example, the notebook compiled by a lawyer of the Rawdon family in the mid-eighteenth century. It contains abstracts of deeds relating to the fraudulent sale of land parcels of Rawdon's share of the 10,000 acres in the 1650s and 1660s, and notes on legal precedents on Barbados. BL, Add. Ms. 33845.

control over the colony between different members of the English gentry and their merchant backers in the City of London, which created a climate of fear and suspicion in the colony. The failure of both the rival Courteen and Rawdon syndicates to retain effective control over their land on Barbados highlights the difficulties faced by absentee merchants in managing their distant plantations. Having trustworthy agents overseas was essential for merchants to run a successful business in the colonies, along with a legal apparatus which supported their right to reclaim debts and prosecute those who misused their land and goods. In the first years of settlement English merchants trading to Barbados did not benefit from such institutional support and frequently lost out to unscrupulous agents, such as James Holdip. As we will see in Chapter Four, in subsequent decades London merchants would seek to tip the scales in their favour by attempting to exert control over the institutions in London and Barbados concerned with colonial governance.

2. Merchants and the Barbadian Economy, 1630-43

The second section of this chapter provides a broad overview of merchant involvement with Barbados in the pre-sugar era, setting out the necessary background for the third section which will analyse in detail a single merchant voyage to Barbados from 1636-37. It will begin with some necessary background information on how trade with Barbados operated during the 1630s, before moving on to reassess Russell Menard's argument that the economy of Barbados was buoyant in the 1630s and early 1640s, contrary to what historians of the Caribbean had previously understood.

Attracting merchant shipping to regularly visit a colony was the primary factor in determining the success, or failure, of speculative overseas ventures in the seventeenth century. The early Atlantic economy was fiercely competitive, and the terms of trade favoured merchants during the 1630s partly because planters

in the American colonies were suffering from an economic depression.³³ As will become clear, there is little evidence to suggest that the merchant community in early modern England possessed a particularly strong sense of national loyalty. During the 1630s, English merchants would sell tobacco and cotton in markets which offered them the best price. Records produced by the High Court of Admiralty demonstrate how English ships sold Barbados tobacco at locations as varied as Amsterdam, Middelburg, Hamburg, and Genoa.³⁴ English merchants were far more interested in securing maximum profits for themselves than bringing their goods into an English port to guarantee the English state increased revenue through customs duties. This suggests that in the initial phases of England's overseas expansion the empire was not a centralised imperial project.

Similarly, if colonists could not offer a viable product to attract merchant shipping to their shores, then traders would simply visit a different colony which could. It seems English merchants were not overly concerned about the fact that this would deprive colonists of the labourers, manufactured goods, and weaponry necessary for the survival of an overseas plantation. The main factor which ensured traders repeatedly sent their ships to visit the same colony was the prominent role which credit played in merchant-planter business transactions. Once a merchant vessel visited a colony once and departed without settling the debts owed to them by planters, then a return visit in subsequent years was required to collect debts from the previous voyage. As this cycle continued, intricate credit relationships predicated upon trust and obligation were forged between merchants and planters, leading to repeat business and increased trade.

Merchants from England and the Low Countries traded to Barbados in the 1630s because the island represented a new consumer market in the Lesser Antilles. Entrepreneurial merchants willing to risk the transatlantic crossing could make money by selling labourers and manufactured goods from Europe at high prices. Merchant shipping usually visited the island from February to July, during the harvest season.

³³ For this economic depression, see John J. McCusker & Russell R. Menard, *The Economy of British America, 1607-1789* (Chapel Hill, 1985), ch. 3.

³⁴ E.g. TNA HCA 24/94; TNA HCA 13/57.

In October 1637 Peter Hay sent to his kinsman in London Archibald Hay, who in an earlier letter had exhibited interest in engaging in the trade to Barbados, a list of items which would be ‘most profitabell for to be sent on to this Island’ and ‘yeald the graytest pryce and sendest returne for England’.³⁵ This source offers insights into the commodities that were being exchanged in Barbadian commerce during the 1630s. At the top of his list were ‘men servants and maid servants’. Unfree labourers were the most sought-after commodity on Barbados, as they were needed to perform plantation work. In the 1630s, indentured servants from the British Isles represented the most common form of labour transported to Barbados by merchants, who were commonly sold to planters for between £12 and £15 BMC each.³⁶ The importance of servants to the colonial economy was underscored by Peter Hay in October 1638, when he observed how ‘a plantation in this place is worth nothing unless there be good store of hands upon it’. The next set of commodities on the list included various items of clothing, including shoes, drawers, shirts, and Monmouth caps. Indenture contracts usually stipulated that masters were required to provide an annual supply of clothing for their servants, and so a strong demand for these items in the American colonies was always guaranteed. Other commodities that Hay believed would fetch a good price on Barbados were candle wax, tobacco pipes, ‘strong waters’ (spirits such as brandy), and canvas bags for storing bales of cotton.³⁷

Some goods not included on Peter Hay’s list were also commonly transported to Barbados in the 1630s. Weaponry and ammunition were high-value items dispatched by merchants and proprietors to the American plantations to enable colonists to defend themselves from the threat of indigenous attack and assaults from rival European powers. In 1640 both the Earl of Warwick and the Earl of Carlisle contracted with London ship captains to freight weapons and gunpowder to Barbados, for example.³⁸ As

³⁵ For Peter Hay’s list of commodities, see NRS, Hay Papers, GD34/924/1, ‘A inclosure of gudes such ar most profitabell for to be sent on to this Island and what will yeald the graytest pryce and sendest returne for England’, 2 October 1637; NRS, Hay Papers, GD34/924/2, ‘A note of commodities to be sent to Barbados’, [c. October 1637].

³⁶ John Wareing, *Indentured Migration and the Servant Trade from London to America, 1618-1718: ‘There is Great Want of Servants’* (Oxford, 2017), p. 126.

³⁷ NRS, Hay Papers, GD34/924/1; GD34/924/2. See also NRS, Hay Papers, GD34/924/40, ‘An invoice of such goods as I desire you to send me over for tht moneyes which you shall receive for my owne tobacco’, 11 August 1638; NRS, Hay Papers, GD34/924/41, ‘Acompt of that comodities that your wor: sent over unto me’, [c. August 1638]; NRS, Hay Papers, GD34/924/9, Letter from Peter Hay, 2 October 1637. For Peter Hay’s comment on the importance of servants, see NRS, Hay Papers, GD34/924/16, Peter Hay to Archibald Hay, 9 October 1638.

³⁸ TNA, E 190 44/1, f. 34, 51.

the unfree portion of the Barbadian population steadily increased over the course of the 1630s, weapons also helped planters to defend their livelihoods against the internal threat posed by servants and enslaved Africans. Foodstuffs and condiments such as butter, cheese, beef, oil, pepper, sugar, and nutmeg were highly sought after, as were manufactured goods necessary for maintaining an English society in the tropics, such as cutlery, tools, and nails.³⁹ Notable absences from the inventories of items imported to Barbados during the 1630s are draught animals. This is because the high demand for horses and assenegoes (small donkeys from the Azores) in the 1640s and 1650s was closely linked to the animal-powered mills used on Barbados in the early years of the sugar industry, and as such they were not needed in large quantities in the pre-sugar era.

The servants, manufactured goods, and foodstuffs transported to the Caribbean by merchants were exchanged for tropical commodities produced by plantation-owners on Barbados. Trials of new cash crops were conducted by plantation-owners on Barbados in the first few decades after the colony was founded in 1627. The late 1630s and early 1640s could be aptly described as an era of agricultural experimentation in the history of the island. The diverse range of cash crops produced by planters meant that merchants visiting Barbados had a degree of choice in what they received for their goods. As has already been discussed, tobacco was the first crop Englishmen began to produce when they first settled on the island. Evidence from probate records, deed books, and plantation inventories demonstrate how tobacco was the most significant commodity produced on Barbados between 1630 and 1643, despite the poor price it fetched in Europe. Tobacco was attractive for yeoman farmers because, unlike indigo and sugar, the crop required almost no initial capital outlay on expensive equipment to cultivate and process, enabling poor planters or time-expired indentured servants with little credit to speculate in the industry.⁴⁰ But fluctuating prices, the inferior quality of Barbados tobacco, and declining interest in the island among English merchants meant that planters soon began to trial different crops for export.⁴¹

³⁹ *Winthrop Papers*, Vol. 1., pp. 356-357, Henry Winthrop to Emmanuel Downing, 22 August 1627; *Winthrop Papers*, Vol. 1., pp. 361-362, Henry Winthrop to John Winthrop, 15 October 1627; John Bruce, ed., *Letters and Papers of the Verney Family Down to the End of the Year 1639* (London, 1853), pp. 196-198; *APCC*, p. 266, 270-71, 278.

⁴⁰ Menard, *Sweet Negotiations*, pp. 19-21, 24.

⁴¹ Dunn, *Sugar and Slaves*, p. 53.

Cotton, ginger, and indigo emerged as viable candidates. Cotton had been grown on the island as early as 1631, when Sir Henry Colt reported how ‘ye trade of Cotton’ was filling the planters on Barbados ‘with hope’.⁴² Cotton ‘engines’, which were used to clean the cotton by removing seeds and other impurities, do not start appearing in plantation inventories and deed books until 1634, indicating that the cultivation of cotton at a commercial scale began around the mid-1630s.⁴³ Unlike the tobacco produced on Barbados, the cotton raised by planters had a good reputation among merchants in Europe. According to Archibald Hay, ‘Barbados cotton of all other is esteemed best if it be well cleared and it is a staple commoditie that will ever be worth money’.⁴⁴ But planters keen to move away from tobacco cultivation were hampered by a lack of canvas bags used to pack cotton for transportation across the Atlantic. In August 1638, for example, Peter Hay sent the first of many complaints detailing how he had intended to send cotton home to England but had been prevented in doing so due to a lack of canvas bags ‘to stife it in’.⁴⁵ By the late 1630s overproduction had caused the price of cotton, which had stood at six pence per lb. in London in 1636, to fall by nearly 50 percent at markets in England and the Low Countries. Frustrated with declining cotton prices and legislation prohibiting the cultivation of tobacco in the Lesser Antilles, planters on Barbados were once again forced to experiment with different crops and seek an alternative export commodity.⁴⁶ From about 1639 some plantation-owners on Barbados began to trial the cultivation of ginger and indigo. These commodities continued to be produced on Barbados throughout the seventeenth century, but indigo took on special significance between 1640 and 1642, when it temporarily became ‘the most profitable commodity raised in the West Indies’ due to a buoyant market in London and Amsterdam.⁴⁷

Now that we have established the broad dimensions of Barbadian trade during the 1630s, we can move on to reassess Menard’s revisionist thesis regarding the economic development of Barbados in the pre-

⁴² Harlow, *Colonising Expeditions*, p. 69.

⁴³ Gragg, *Englishmen Transplanted*, pp. 94-97.

⁴⁴ NRS, Hay Papers, GD34/923/8, ‘The answer of the letter sent to Peter Hay by the ship *William* of London’, 10 October 1637.

⁴⁵ NRS, Hay Papers, GD34/924/13, Peter Hay to Archibald Hay, 11 August 1638; NRS, Hay Papers, GD34/924/14, Peter Hay to James and Archibald Hay, 11 August 1638; NRS, Hay Papers, GD34/924/17, Peter Hay to James and Archibald Hay, 24 May 1639.

⁴⁶ Gragg, *Englishmen Transplanted*, p. 96; Batie, ‘Why Sugar’, pp. 11-12.

⁴⁷ Batie, ‘Why Sugar’, pp. 14-15.

sugar era, which by his reading disproves the ‘sugar revolution’ hypothesis. The two key elements of his argument relate to the chronology of the rise of African slavery and plantation agriculture in the colony. He contends that ‘sugar did not bring slavery and plantation agriculture to Barbados. The island was in the process of becoming a plantation colony and slave society while sugar was still a relatively minor crop’.⁴⁸ If correct, this interpretation would overturn the longstanding scholarly consensus that it was the onset of sugar production in the mid-1640s which brought ‘revolutionary’ demographic, economic, social, and environmental changes to Barbados. The bulk of the evidence used by Menard in *Sweet Negotiations* is from deeds and mortgages at the Barbados Department of Archives. His conclusions are modified, however, if we look at quantitative and qualitative evidence from correspondence, wills, plantation inventories, court cases, and records compiled by officials in the port of London.⁴⁹

A good place to start is Menard’s argument that African slavery preceded the emergence of a commercial sugar industry on Barbados. It is true that Englishmen had been familiar with African slavery since their first forays into the Atlantic world during the sixteenth century, and that enslaved Africans were present on Barbados before the onset of sugar cultivation.⁵⁰ Enslaved Africans were among the colonising party which first settled Barbados after being captured from a Spanish prize, for instance.⁵¹ The earliest example of a slave trading venture to Barbados was undertaken by the Guinea Company and dates to 1641. The next reference to the transatlantic slave trade was made in January 1642, when a correspondent on Barbados made a passing comment in a letter about how ‘here are come lately about five hundred Negroes and more dayly expected’.⁵² Because the earliest remarks about slave trading ventures to Barbados date to the period 1641-42, before a commercial sugar industry had emerged on the island, it is reasonable to suggest that what served as the initial stimulus to the growth of slavery on the island was

⁴⁸ Menard, *Sweet Negotiations*, p. 35.

⁴⁹ Also important to note is how Menard did not conduct research in all of the relevant deed books at the Barbados Department of Archives. He neglected to use a key volume with a lot of evidence for the period from 1655 to 1660 (RB3/5). His dataset of deeds and mortgages is therefore not a fully representative sample. Larry Gragg, ‘Review of Sweet Negotiations: Sugar, Slavery, and Plantation Agriculture in Early Barbados by Russell R. Menard’, *The South Carolina Historical Magazine*, Vol. 108, No. 2 (2007), p. 170.

⁵⁰ Michael Guasco, *Slaves and Englishmen: Human Bondage in the Early Modern Atlantic World* (Philadelphia, 2014).

⁵¹ Harlow, *Colonising Expeditions*, p. 36.

⁵² For the 1641 Guinea Company voyage, see BDA, RB3/1, pp. 202-3. For the January 1642 reference, see NRS, Hay Papers, GD34/940/1, James Browne to James and Archibald Hay, 17 January 1641/42.

the growing demand for labour caused by the diversification in crops being cultivated for export, which included indigo, ginger, and sugar. Some of these enslaved Africans must have also cultivated tobacco and cotton, which were still the island's main export crops in the early 1640s.⁵³ However, this does not necessarily support Menard's conclusion that 'slavery was expanding rapidly on the island before sugar became the dominant crop', and that in 1643 'there were already about six thousand slaves on Barbados'.⁵⁴

Through careful archival research Larry Gragg has shown how, out of 557 labourers recorded in deeds and wills at the Barbados Department of Archives from 1627 to 1641, there was only a single enslaved African.⁵⁵ While this solitary labourer surely cannot have been the only enslaved African living on the island between these dates, it raises serious doubts about the validity of Menard's argument that slavery underwent rapid expansion on Barbados in the 1630s, with as many as a thousand enslaved Africans arriving each year.⁵⁶ Moreover, it is only after the emergence of a commercial sugar industry in the mid-1640s that we begin to see comments from first-hand observers about there being a significant population of enslaved Africans on Barbados. Take George Downing, for example, who observed in 1645 that 'negroes' were 'the life of this place', affirming how black labourers were becoming an increasingly important part of the plantation workforce, a trend that would continue over the course of the sugar boom.⁵⁷ We have no comparable observations for the 1630s to support Menard's claim that enslaved Africans were on the island in sizeable numbers then, despite the survival of substantial correspondence relating to Barbados for this decade within the Hay of Haystoun Papers, which Menard did not consult.

While the impetus behind the commencement of the transatlantic slave trade to Barbados was caused by a diversification in the production of cash crops in the early 1640s, only one of which was sugar, the

⁵³ For evidence tobacco and cotton were the main export crops in the early 1640s, see Menard, *Sweet Negotiations*, p. 35.

⁵⁴ Menard, *Sweet Negotiations*, pp. 30-31.

⁵⁵ This stands in marked contrast to the period from 1642-1660, when three-quarters of the 4,204 labourers mentioned in deeds and wills were enslaved Africans. Gragg, *Englishmen Transplanted*, p. 119.

⁵⁶ Menard, *Sweet Negotiations*, p. 47, table 10. Menard does not cite primary source evidence to support this claim.

⁵⁷ For Indian slavery on Barbados, see Arena, 'Indian Slaves from Guiana in Seventeenth-Century Barbados'. For George Downing's quote, see *Winthrop Papers*, Vol. V., p. 43, Sir George Downing to John Winthrop Jr., 26 August 1645.

evidence clearly demonstrates how slave trading ventures to the colony accelerated markedly after a commercial sugar industry had emerged in the mid-1640s. The growth of slavery on Barbados, which using Menard's own quantitative evidence we can ascertain with precision occurred between 1644 and 1649,⁵⁸ was a direct response to the escalating demand for labour precipitated by the onset of sugar production in 1643-45. This is why imports of indentured servants also increased over the same period.⁵⁹ Menard is prepared to admit that 'the quickened pace of change clearly reflects the rise of sugar', but to make his wider argument about the shortcomings of the 'sugar revolution' hypothesis work, reads this evidence about escalating imports of enslaved Africans backwards to the 1630s without hard evidence to support his argument. The quantitative and qualitative evidence we have at our disposal reinforces the traditional interpretation of the rise of African slavery on Barbados. By my reading of surviving deeds, wills, and correspondence, the population of enslaved Africans on Barbados was small in the 1630s, and the transatlantic slave trade to the island only began to expand noticeably in the mid-1640s, after commercial sugar production had begun. A more sustained analysis of the involvement of English merchants in the transatlantic slave trade to Barbados in the 1640s and 1650s will be undertaken in Chapter Three.

The second part of Menard's revisionist interpretation of Barbadian economic development in the pre-sugar era centres on the growth of plantation agriculture in the colony, arguing that land aggregation and the consolidation of large plantations was underway on Barbados long before sugar became a staple crop.⁶⁰ What is the evidence, then, that Barbados enjoyed sustained economic success in the 1630s? The clearing of land for tobacco cultivation in the 1630s and the process of farm-building certainly facilitated the rapid transition to sugar production which began in the mid-1640s.⁶¹ Furthermore, as Alison Games has correctly noted, there were opportunities for men of small means to attain social advancement on Barbados in this era. With land prices on the island low when compared to what they would become

⁵⁸ See Menard's table of 'Barbadian plantations during the export boom', which shows how the number of slaves per estate among all landowners was 1.4 in the years 1644-45, which increased to 4.5 in the years 1646-49. Menard, *Sweet Negotiations*, p. 33.

⁵⁹ Menard, *Sweet Negotiations*, p. 45.

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 27.

⁶¹ *Ibid.*, p. 12.

following the advent of sugar production, there were opportunities for former servants to speculate in the tobacco industry, generate tidy profits, and accumulate property.⁶²

But there is strong archival evidence that the Barbadian economy was struggling for most of this decade. English merchants displayed a distinct lack of interest in trading to Barbados during the 1630s, principally because the island's main export commodity, tobacco, was deemed to be of very poor quality when compared to that produced at Virginia.⁶³ Barbadian planters diversified the crops they produced in response to this economic depression. Menard is correct to suggest that the island's economic revival began in the late 1630s and early 1640s, due to successful experiments with cotton, indigo, and ginger. This commercial recovery is notable, as land prices on the island increased from £1.30 per acre to £2.30 BMC per acre between 1640 and 1642. But it would be a stretch to suggest this represented a sustained 'economic boom', and that increasing Barbadian land prices demonstrates how planters on the island were prosperous for much of the pre-sugar era.⁶⁴ Carl and Roberta Bridenbaugh's analysis of plantation inventories on Barbados in 1643, just before the sugar boom began in earnest, highlights how household furnishings were crude, even among prominent planters such as John Higginbotham and Philip Bell (the colony's governor).⁶⁵

As part of the process through which Barbadians diversified their economy in the early 1640s, planters also began experimenting with the cultivation of sugar cane. The earliest evidence for commercial sugar production on the island dates to 1643.⁶⁶ In October 1643 a pioneer of sugar cultivation on Barbados, James Holdip, travelled to England to petition the King for a grant ensuring that 'noe other Sugars may bee imported into his Maties dominions but such as are made upon the Barbadas'. Moreover, as part of the negotiations which saw a 200-acre plantation sold to the merchant Thomas Applewhaite in December 1644, James Holdip was required to provide 'so many good sugar canes to plant and upon the bargained

⁶² Games, 'Opportunity and Mobility in Early Barbados', pp. 165-81.

⁶³ Dunn, *Sugar and Slaves*, p. 53.

⁶⁴ Menard, *Sweet Negotiations*, p. 27.

⁶⁵ Bridenbaugh, *No Peace Beyond the Line*, p. 116.

⁶⁶ The first evidence we have for sugar cultivation on Barbados comes from July 1641, when Francis Skeete sold a 550-acre plantation along with 'one Ingen for Sugar'. Although whether Skeete was producing sugar for export is unclear. See Gragg, *Englishmen Transplanted*, p. 100.

premises as shall be expedient and needfull'.⁶⁷ A sugar monoculture did not develop straight away, and I think Menard is therefore right to speak of a 'diversified export boom' in the 1640s. However, the evidence clearly points towards how the pace of change picks up after the beginnings of sugar production in the period 1643-45. Even though sugar cane did not become the main commodity used in property transactions on Barbados until 1648-50, and therefore the island's dominant export, this does not necessarily mean that changes on the island in preceding years were not precipitated by sugar and the opportunities this new cash crop presented.⁶⁸ Surely the timing of the social and economic transformation of Barbados, which began at precisely the same time as a commercial sugar industry first emerged, cannot be a coincidence.

Before presenting archival evidence to reinforce this argument, it is helpful to quote in full Nicholas Foster's description, written in 1650, of what he experienced as a planter on Barbados in the 1630s and 1640s. This supports the argument that interest in the colony among English merchants was low for much of the 1630s and that the island underwent a 'diversified export boom' in the 1640s, but that the commodity most important to this economic upturn was sugar:

Now many years since, this Island was in a very low condition, in regard the Commodities (then there produced) were onely Tobaccoes and Cotton-wools, which (by reason of the great quantities transported from thence, and other places) was of very small value: Insomuch that Merchants began to neglect the supplying of it in so large a manner as formerly they had done, which presented it in a declining condition, and small hopes appeared of raising any fortunes there for the future, the Inhabitants (being so wearied out with the small profits they reaped of their toylsome labours) daily run from the Island in Boats, being very much indebted both to the Merchants, and also to one another. The decaying condition of this Island (so plainly appearing) some of ingenious spirits set their wits at worke to consider which way the desolation of this Plantation might be prevented; which could not possibly be effected without the producing of

⁶⁷ For Holdip's journey to England, see NRS, Hay Papers, GD34/939/6, 'Thomas Robinson at St Christophers to Thomas Chappell secretary to James Earl of Carlisle', 24 October 1643. For the Holdip-Applewhaite land sale, see BDA, RB3/1, pp. 536-538. While there is no direct evidence to support such an argument, Eric Otremba argues it is probable that Holdip's connection with both Marmaduke Rawdon and the London merchant community played a role in helping him to become an early adopter of commercial sugar production on Barbados. Otremba, 'Inventing Ingenios', p. 136-138.

⁶⁸ Menard, *Sweet Negotiations*, p. 18.

some richer commodities to invite the Merchants to supply them. And considering Sugar was not the least of commodities, (finding the situation of the place promising that way) resolved to make tryall thereof, and accordingly did; and with divers yeeres paines, care, patience and industry, with the disbursing of vast summes of money, brought the same to perfection...in few yeeres there was a considerable number of works erected so that (for these divers years last past) there hath been, and is, a very faire Correspondency held with England, New England, Holland, Humbrough, and other places, many both Merchants (and others) having thereby raised themselves very considerable Fortunes. There being many Millions of Sugars transported from thence yearly, and the number of Ships that come yearely to that Island, not lesse than a hundred Sayle; the commodities (being not onely Sugar) but also Indico, Ginger, with Cotton-wools, and some small quantities of Tobacco.⁶⁹

A standard measure of colonial success is whether a colony enjoyed demographic growth and prospered by attracting large numbers of merchant vessels to visit its shores. Estimates indicate that the free and unfree population of Barbados saw sustained growth in the first decade following English settlement on the island, increasing from 1,000 persons in 1630 to 14,000 persons in 1640.⁷⁰ In 1635, 20 percent of all emigrants leaving London for the American plantations travelled to Barbados.⁷¹ We can be confident, therefore, that the population of Barbados expanded in the pre-sugar era. The next question to ask is whether there is enough source material available to allow historians to quantify the volume of trade to Barbados between 1630 and 1643. There are no surviving port books which detail imports and exports from Barbados itself until the late seventeenth century, but data abstracted from the London port books permits an analysis of the number of vessels dispatched from London to the American plantations by denizens and 'aliens'. When compared to the complete absence of extant London port books for the 1640s and 1650s, the data available for the 1630s enables historians to make better estimates about the dimensions of colonial trade with England in this decade. London port books have survived for 1621, 1626, 1627-28, 1630, 1633, 1634, 1638, and 1640.⁷² Poring over these volumes is a laborious and time-

⁶⁹ Nicholas Foster, *A briefe relation of the late horrid rebellion acted in the island Barbadas, in the West-Indies. Wherein is contained their inhumane acts and actions, in fining an banishing the well-affected to the Parliament of England (both men and women) without the least cause given them so to doe: Disposessing all such as any way opposed these their mischievous actions* (London, 1650), pp. 1-3.

⁷⁰ McCusker and Menard, 'The Sugar Industry in the Seventeenth Century', p. 293 (Table 9.2).

⁷¹ Alison Games, *Migration and the Origins of the English Atlantic World* (Cambridge, Mass., 1999), calculated from the data in Table 1.1. on p. 21.

⁷² Brenner, *Merchants and Revolution*, p. 103, footnote 41.

consuming task, however, and during the three-year confines of a PhD project it was only possible to complete a detailed analysis of the year 1640. This sample reveals how, in the year between Christmas 1639 and Christmas 1640, there were 22 vessels dispatched by denizens of London to the American plantations. Ten of these ships went to New England, eight to Barbados, four to Virginia, and none to St. Christopher.⁷³ There were no ships dispatched from the port of London to any of the American colonies by ‘aliens’ over the same period.⁷⁴

This shows how, out of all the American plantations, denizens of London displayed a preference of trading to New England and Barbados in the year 1640. This would appear to offer some support for Menard’s revisionist argument surrounding the dynamism of the Barbadian economy in the early 1640s (before the rise of sugar). Unfortunately, we cannot extrapolate any further conclusions from these data, because there are no complementary records for the same year specifying how many vessels were dispatched to the American plantations by English-born citizens of London. Another issue is that the intended destination of a merchant vessel when leaving England, which is recorded in the export port books, was not always where the ship ended up. Take the voyage of the *Abraham* in 1636 as an example. As we will see in the next section of this chapter, Matthew Craddock and his co-partners originally intended for their vessel to travel to Virginia, but the ship’s charterparty specified that the master could also voyage to St. Christopher or Barbados if necessary. The latter destination is precisely where the vessel eventually arrived after unforeseen circumstances forced her to return to the Isle of Wight for repairs.⁷⁵ It is therefore entirely possible that those ships where the intended destination was noted as Barbados in the port books never actually ended up there, or vice versa.

We can come to a deeper understanding of the commercial preferences of London’s colonial traders in the 1630s by analysing documentation from the customhouse in the port of London. This provides quantitative evidence for how London merchants preferred to import tobacco cultivated in colonies other

⁷³ TNA, E 190 44/1, ff. 14, 27-28, 34-36, 51, 52, 61, 63, 68, 73, 74, 77, 79, 81, 88, 109, 142, 168, 170, 187, 195, 202.

⁷⁴ TNA, E 190 44/2.

⁷⁵ TNA, HCA 30/636.

than Barbados from 1637 to 1640, undermining Menard's argument that the colony was experiencing an economic boom based around tobacco exports at this time (see Figure 1.2, below). Out of a total of 7,179,114 lb. of tobacco imported into London by English merchants between 1637 and 1640, only 424,454 lb. (just under six percent) of this tobacco was produced on Barbados. By contrast, approximately 77 percent of the tobacco was shipped from Virginia, 14 percent from St. Christopher, and 3 percent from Spain (see Figure 1.2, below). This might explain why in the London port books for 1640 we see large quantities of 'Virgenea tobacco' being re-exported to Rotterdam, Ostend, and Livorno, but very little 'Barbadoes tobacco'.⁷⁶

The amount of Barbados tobacco imported to London by English merchants declined over time as well, from 124,593 lb. in 1637 to 66,895 lb. in 1640.⁷⁷ This probably stands as testament to the commercial impact of a cross-national treaty agreed between the English and French to prohibit the production of tobacco in the Lesser Antilles between May 1639 and the autumn of 1641, which was intended to help the price of the leaf recover after a serious depression linked to overproduction.⁷⁸ It may also reflect changing patterns of production on Barbados, because cotton, indigo, and ginger were also being cultivated in the colony by the early 1640s. But we must remember that tobacco was still the most important cash crop produced by planters on the island between 1637-40, and as late as 1647 was involved in completing 47 percent of financial transactions on the island.⁷⁹ We can therefore attach importance to what the low quantities of Barbados tobacco imported into London suggests about the economic health of the island in the late 1630s, namely that it was not undergoing an export boom.

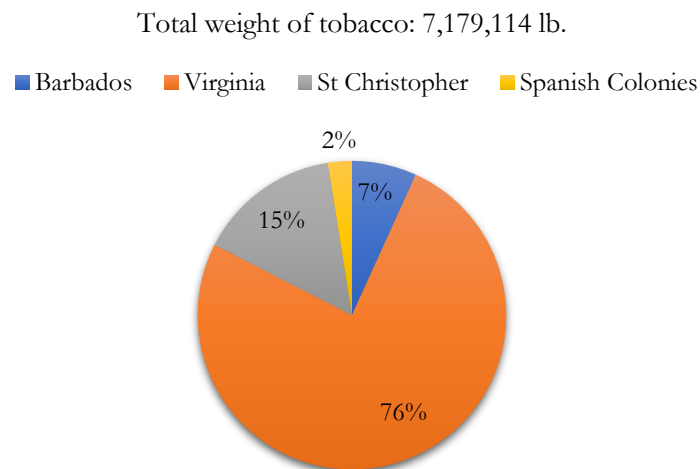
⁷⁶ The only example of 'Barbadoes tobacco' being re-exported in the 1640 port books was by Joseph Hawes to Leghorn (Livorno). TNA, E 190 44/1, f. 67.

⁷⁷ BL, Add. Ms. 35865, f. 248, 'Tobaccoes entred in the porte of London in fower yeeres from Lady day 1637'.

⁷⁸ Gragg, *Englishmen Transplanted*, p. 92.

⁷⁹ Menard and McCusker, in *Tropical Babylons*, p. 292 (Table 9.1); Gragg, *Englishmen Transplanted*, 92.

Figure 1.2. Weight of tobacco entered into London by Englishmen 1637-40 (lb. tobacco)



Source: BL, Add. Ms. 35865, f. 248, 'Tobaccoes entred in the porte of London in fower yeeres from Lady day 1637'.

This corroborates what qualitative source material from the correspondence of the Hay Proprietors tells us about the size of commerce with the island during the 1630s. The inhabitants of Barbados were regularly disappointed with the volume of trade being driven to their island from merchants in the City of London. For example, in October 1637 Peter Hay wrote to the Carlisle trustees to advise them that he had not been able to 'find anye shiping in this place bound for London' for some time, and that he could not, therefore, send a large consignment of tobacco to England. In a separate letter, Peter Hay informed his employers that the island was usually 'verie scarce of shiping' for six months of the year, between August and January.⁸⁰ Such statements about the lack of merchant shipping from London visiting Barbados in the 1630s were common, which casts considerable doubt over the proposition that the colony was undergoing an export boom in this period, especially when London merchants play such a pivotal role in Menard's argument. Even in the early 1640s, when planters on Barbados had diversified their economy, and were producing cotton, indigo, and ginger as well as tobacco, there were still grave concerns voiced on Barbados about the economic health of their colony. In August 1640 Peter Hay

⁸⁰ NRS, Hay Papers, GD34/923/7, Peter Hay to Archibald Hay, 2 October 1637; NRS, Hay Papers, GD34/924/9, Peter Hay to Archibald Hay, 2 October 1637.

reported that a period of drought had caused very little cotton to be produced that year, meaning ‘the inhabitants is like to be starved unless that God be more mercifull unto us’.⁸¹ If accurate, such comments depict a colony in the throes of depression and not one with a thriving economy.

Why was it that English merchants displayed such a lack of interest in trading to Barbados during the 1630s, even though we saw in the previous section that it was London merchants who had financed the first settlement of the island in the late 1620s? The most compelling explanation is that other colonies in the English Atlantic world, such as Virginia and St. Christopher, were more attractive markets for English merchants trading to the American plantations in the 1630s. This is because merchants interested in the tobacco trade had already developed business ties based upon debt and credit with planters living in these older and well-established colonies. It took time for merchants to develop such relationships with planters, which were necessary to ensure repeat business and the growth of trade. The process of forming these business relationships was slowed on Barbados, because the main export commodity produced on the island in the 1630s, tobacco, was regarded as being of exceedingly poor quality.

Barbados tobacco fetched a low price in European markets and was discriminated against by the English state which placed a higher customs duty on it to discourage production. Part of the problem was that the environment of Barbados was not favourable for the cultivation of high-grade tobacco. For optimum growth, the tobacco plant needs to be constantly surrounded with well-drained soil, but on Barbados the soil becomes highly saturated during the rainy season from May to November. Hence the tobacco cultivated on Barbados in the seventeenth century was frequently described as being of poor quality by anxious planters and disgruntled merchants. It quickly gained a reputation as being a ‘commoditye of noe better estimation, nott worthy anything, for it is the worst of all tobaccos’.⁸² This situation was further exacerbated by the lack of care taken by Barbados planters in preparing their crop for shipment, which John Winthrop noticed as early as 1629 when he described the tobacco sent by his son as ‘verye ill

⁸¹ NRS, Hay Papers, GD34/924/23, Peter Hay to Archibald Hay, 22 August 1640.

⁸² For examples of these complaints, see NRS, Hay Papers, GD34/931 IA 335, Daniel Fletcher to Archibald Hay, 25 June 1640. Such a situation was compounded by the fact that planters sometimes just left their tobacco in rolls, and would not present it nicely so that it could maintain its quality over the course of the transatlantic journey. See Menard, *Sweet Negotiations*, p. 21.

conditioned, fowle, full of stalkes and evill coloured'.⁸³ As the data displayed in Figure 1.2 aptly demonstrates, the higher-grade tobacco produced in Virginia was a more appealing alternative for London merchants already under pressure by metropolitan legislation to control prices by restricting the amount of the leaf they could import on an annual basis.⁸⁴

Who were the merchants that were trading at Barbados in the pre-sugar era? The scattered evidence we have indicates that those London merchants who were active participants in the provisioning and tobacco trades to New England, Virginia, St. Christopher, and Providence Island also maintained business interests on Barbados during the 1630s. Figures familiar to early American historians such as Maurice Thomson, Matthew Craddock, William Pennoyer, Samuel Vassall, Richard Bateson, Edward Wood, and Richard Cranley, all chartered trading ventures to Barbados in this decade.⁸⁵ These merchants do not appear to have directly owned plantations on the island during the 1630s, preferring instead to just be involved with marketing and not plantation production. Though, as we will see in subsequent chapters, this dynamic would change in subsequent decades following the emergence of a sugar industry on Barbados. Lesser known London merchants, such as Alexander Lindsay and Edmund Keysar, began a trading relationship with Barbados during the 1630s which would be sustained into the 1640s and 1650s.⁸⁶

There is little evidence to suggest that merchants operating out of Bristol maintained extensive trading connections with Barbados before the transition to sugar. The Bristol port books for 1636-1660 are no longer legible due to water damage, but the survival of depositions heard before the mayor and his court of aldermen, which mostly relate to maritime affairs, give an indication of the trading patterns of Bristol merchants in the late 1630s and early 1640s.⁸⁷ While there is evidence of several voyages made to Virginia and St. Christopher, there are no examples of trading ventures to Barbados before 1643.⁸⁸ Of course, this

⁸³ *Winthrop Papers*, Vol. 2., pp. 66-69, John Winthrop to Henry Winthrop, 30 January 1628/29.

⁸⁴ For this metropolitan legislation, see *CSPC AWI*, Vol. 1., p. 125, 6 January 1631.

⁸⁵ TNA, HCA 24/101, f. 122; Brenner, *Merchants and Revolution*, pp. 186-190.

⁸⁶ NRS, Hay Papers, GD34/924/28, Peter Hay to James Hay, 16 September 1641.

⁸⁷ H. E. Nott, ed., *The Deposition Books of Bristol: Vol. I. 1643-1647* (Bristol, 1935); H. E. Nott & Elizabeth Ralph, eds., *The Deposition Books of Bristol: Vol. II. 1650—1654* (Bristol, 1948); Roger Hayden, ed., *The Records of a Church of Christ in Bristol, 1640-1687* (Bristol, 1974), p. 8.

⁸⁸ Nott, ed., *The Deposition Books of Bristol: Vol. 1.*, pp. 53-54, 63-65; Nott and Ralph, eds., *The Deposition Books of Bristol: Vol. 2*, pp. 187-90.

does not mean that such voyages did not happen. We know that the Bristol merchant George Standfast was part-owner of a 50-acre indigo plantation on Barbados in 1641.⁸⁹ But what it does provide is proxy evidence to suggest that in the pre-sugar era the amount of trade between Bristol and Barbados was smaller than that to St. Christopher and Virginia, mirroring commercial patterns in London.

One might also expect to see Scottish merchants maintaining a close relationship with Barbados, especially considering that it was a Scotsman (the Earl of Carlisle) who possessed the proprietary patent to the 'Caribbee Isles'. But the available evidence instead reveals that the Hay proprietors were more closely associated with the London merchant community. They were heavily dependent on London merchants to carry their tobacco taken as rent payments from planters back to the metropole. For instance, the Scotsman and proprietary agent Peter Hay had shipped 427 rolls of tobacco in the *Abraham*, 241 rolls of tobacco in the *William and Martha*, and 30 bags of cotton on the *Revenge* for the use of his kinsman Archibald Hay in London by the late 1630s.⁹⁰ All of these ships were owned by London merchants. The Hay proprietors also used the business acumen of merchants in London to try to find the best market for their tobacco at various ports in northern Europe.⁹¹ By 1640, Archibald Hay had become part-owner of the *Hopewell* with a group of London merchants, and together they adventured £1800 to outfit the vessel for a voyage to Barbados. The *Hopewell* returned with a consignment of 50,000 lb. of tobacco, and proceeded to undertake several more successful trading missions to the colony.⁹² The reason why the Earl of Carlisle and those managing his proprietorship came to develop such a close relationship with London merchants, as opposed to Scottish traders, was because Carlisle had relocated permanently

⁸⁹ Gragg, *Englishmen Transplanted*, p. 136.

⁹⁰ NRS, Hay Papers, GD34/923/42, James Hay to Peter Hay, [c. 1637].

⁹¹ NRS, Hay Papers, GD34/924/10, Peter Hay to Archibald Hay, 13 April 1638.

⁹² Archibald Hay was part-owner of the *Hopewell* with Mr Jonson, Mr Thomson (probably Maurice Thomson), Mr Roberts, and the ship's captain Mr Tucker. The parcel of tobacco which the vessel returned with was consigned to Thomas Chambers, a merchant in Bristol. See NRS, Hay Papers, GD34/924/3, Peter Hay to Archibald Hay, 29 August 1643. For more evidence of the Hay Proprietors engaging in trade with Barbados, see NRS, Hay Papers, GD34/924/7, Peter Hay to Archibald Hay, 29 September 1637; GD34/924/9, Peter Hay to Archibald Hay, 2 October 1637; GD34/939/6, Thomas Robinson at St. Christopher to Thomas Chappell the secretary of the Earl of Carlisle, 24 October 1643; GD34/943/3, Letter from William Powrey, 19 November 1643; J. H. Bennett, 'Peter Hay, Proprietary Agent in Barbados, 1636-1641', *Jamaican Historical Review*, Vol. 5, No. 2 (1965), pp. 11-12.

to London following the accession of James VI to the throne of England in 1603, which enabled him to develop an extensive network within the City.

Transnational trading connections between Barbados and the United Provinces, and especially Holland and Zeeland, deserve special attention. Historians have traditionally argued that Dutch merchants played an important role in financing the sugar boom on Barbados in the 1640s. But their involvement with the colony in the pre-sugar era has not been given much consideration. After the conquest of Pernambuco in 1630, Dutch traders regularly took the southern route across the Atlantic, resupplied in Brazil, before 'cruising' the waters of the Caribbean, stopping off at various ports in the Lesser Antilles to trade with English and French planters. By 1634, their visits to Barbados had become frequent enough that Governor Henry Hawley introduced new legislation ordering that 'all Dutch, French, and other strange Ships' that traded at Barbados would be required to pay a £1 BMC anchorage fee and a customs duty of six percent.⁹³ Such attempts to monitor, control, and tax transnational trade in the 1630s proved ineffective, however, as Dutch merchants could easily evade the authorities by trading at the smaller bays and inlets of the island.⁹⁴ Evidence compiled by Yda Schreuder from notarial protocols at the Amsterdam Municipal Archives shows how there were 24 Dutch vessels recorded as having traded at Barbados between 1633 and 1639.⁹⁵ It is highly likely there were many more Dutch traders who made ad hoc and illicit visits to Barbados in the 1630s.

When it came to localised exchanges that did not involve extensions of long credit, planters living on Barbados and in other English colonies often preferred doing business with Dutch traders. Merchants from the United Provinces had a reputation for selling their wares at cheaper rates and offering lower freight charges than their English counterparts. When a disgruntled Peter Hay heard that the tobacco he had sent to Europe on his own account had produced very little profit, he mused that it would make

⁹³ Gragg, *Englishmen Transplanted*, pp. 38-39; Koot, *Empire at the Periphery*, p. 14; Klooster, *The Dutch Moment*, pp. 164-166.

⁹⁴ NRS, Hay Papers, GD34/923/4, Peter Hay to Archibald Hay, 10 February 1637/38.

⁹⁵ Yda Schreuder, 'Evidence from the Notarial Protocols in the Amsterdam Municipal Archives about Trade Relationships between Amsterdam and Barbados in the Seventeenth Century', *Journal of the Barbados Museum and Historical Society*, Vol. 52 (2006), pp. 73-74.

more financial sense to exchange goods directly with Dutch merchants visiting Barbados. That way he could receive manufactured goods immediately and at cheaper rates, not have to pay fees to freight his tobacco to Europe, and most importantly, it would enable him to set a price for his tobacco that was not determined by an unpredictable market in Europe.⁹⁶

Like many Barbados planters, Peter Hay turned to Dutch traders when English merchant shipping was unavailable. In August 1638 he struck a deal with the master of a Dutch ship named the *Waterdog* to freight 42,000 lb. of tobacco to Amsterdam. Specific instructions were given for the vessel to proceed direct to Hamburg if the market for tobacco at Amsterdam proved unsatisfactory. The futile litigation which followed when the vessel did not venture to Hamburg as instructed demonstrates that, unless they travelled back to Europe with their merchandise, planters had little power over the market in which their goods were to be sold. Peter Hay explained that his reason for ‘shipping of theis goods upon this dutch ship was because I could not have any English shipping here when I made my bargayne and convenants...and alsoe because I heare that tobacco was worth no money in England’. While at Barbados, the vessel masqueraded as the ‘*Waterdog* of Southampton’, probably as part of an attempt to avoid paying the anchorage fee and custom duty levied on foreign merchants by the colonial authorities.⁹⁷ Such fraudulent practices, which we must presume were quite common, makes it extremely difficult for historians to be able to compare levels of Dutch trade at Barbados with that of English trade during the 1630s. All that the available evidence enables us to conclude is that Dutch traders were a familiar sight in the waters around Barbados from 1630 and 1643, and that they were often involved in localised exchanges with English planters.

We can say with some confidence, though, that Dutch traders and markets were of more significance to the economy of Barbados in the 1630s than during the sugar boom a decade later. At a time when English merchant vessels were not frequent visitors to Barbados, preferring instead to trade elsewhere in

⁹⁶ NRS, Hay Papers, GD34/924/10, Peter Hay to Archibald Hay, 13 April 1638. See also Koot, *Empire at the Periphery*, pp. 36-37.

⁹⁷ NRS, Hay Papers, GD34/923/14, Bill of lading of the *Waterdog* of Southampton, 5 August 1638; GD34/923/15, Peter Hay to James Hay, 3 August 1638; GD34/922/8, Letter to the Governor and Council of Barbados, 27 May 1639; Bennett, ‘Peter Hay, Proprietary Agent’, p. 15.

the English Atlantic world, Dutch traders selling manufactured goods and provisions at cheap rates offered a much-needed lifeline to planters on the island struggling to find a viable export crop. The heavy customs duties imposed upon tobacco imports into England, and the poor price Barbados tobacco could command in London, also meant that markets in the Low Countries such as Middelburg, Amsterdam, and Rotterdam played an important role for Barbadian planters during the 1630s, primarily because these ports offered more favourable conditions for selling their tobacco. This commercial dynamic would change by the mid-1640s, however, as English merchants began to invest heavily in the Barbados sugar industry, escalate their involvement in the transatlantic slave trade, and extend large amounts of credit to Barbados planters.⁹⁸ I do not mean to imply that Dutch trade to Barbados was greater in volume in the 1630s than during the sugar boom, which statistics show was clearly not the case (even after the passage of the Navigation Act in 1651), just that it was of greater significance to Barbadian planters in this decade relative to English shipping.

This section has explored merchant involvement with Barbados in the 1630s and early 1640s, and in the process has re-evaluated the historiographical debate on the economic development of Barbados in the pre-sugar era. By studying mercantile activity on Barbados between 1630-43, it is evident that for most of this period England's overseas traders were more interested in tobacco produced in Virginia than Barbados. This was because English merchants had already established business ties with planters at this colony, and also because Barbados tobacco was an inferior product that fetched lower prices and was subject to higher customs duties in English ports. It has been argued, therefore, that Dutch merchants and markets in the Low Countries were of increased significance to the economy of Barbados in the pre-sugar era. To explore this view further, the final section of this chapter will analyse the accounts and letter books of the *Abraham* to recreate a single merchant voyage to Barbados in 1636-37.

⁹⁸ These developments will be discussed in detail in Chapter Two.

3. Matthew Craddock and the 1636-7 voyage of the *Abraham*

Deposited within the High Court of Admiralty records at the British National Archives are a series of accounts and letter books which relate to the voyage of the *Abraham* from London to Barbados in 1636-37. As far as I am aware, this constitutes the only extant example of a set of merchant accounts relating to Barbados before Richard Poor's ledger from the early eighteenth century (1699-1713), and as such this set of sources provides an unprecedented level of detail about trade to Barbados in the early period of the colony's settlement.⁹⁹ The documents were preserved because the chief factor of the ship, Thomas Anthony, fell ill and died soon after the conclusion of the voyage, and his heirs subsequently sued the owners of the *Abraham* for unpaid wages. Few historians have studied these documents. Kenneth Andrews has developed a case study around Thomas Anthony as part of his inquiry into seafaring in the reign of Charles I, and more recently L. H. Roper has used the voyage of the *Abraham* as an example of a typical provision voyage to the American plantations.¹⁰⁰ But until now no historian of the Caribbean has analysed these accounts and letters in detail, nor considered what they can tell us about trade with Barbados during the 1630s.¹⁰¹

Planning for the voyage of the *Abraham* began in March 1636, when Thomas Anthony agreed to serve as the factor for Matthew Craddock and Company in a journey 'for Vergenye or any other where for 50 shillings the month'. Matthew Craddock was both the chief owner and chief freighter of the *Abraham* in this venture, owning a quarter share in the vessel.¹⁰² Craddock's involvement in overseas trade began in 1616, when he was apprenticed to the cloth trader Sir William Cokayne in the Skinners' Company. Cokayne was a prominent London merchant, who served as governor of the Eastland Company, director

⁹⁹ S. D. Smith, 'The Account Book of Richard Poor, Quaker Merchant of Barbados', *The William and Mary Quarterly*, Vol. 66, No. 3 (2009), pp. 605-628.

¹⁰⁰ Andrews, *Ships, Money, and Politics*, ch. 4; Roper, *Advancing Empire*, pp. 37-41.

¹⁰¹ The *Abraham* account books have not been cited by other historians interested in the economic history of the early Barbados, such as Russell Menard and Larry Gragg.

¹⁰² For information on the shares owned by different merchants in the *Abraham*, see HCA 30/636/5/4; Andrews, *Ships, Money, and Politics*, pp. 90-92.

of the East India Company (1606-09), and Lord Mayor of London (1617-20).¹⁰³ By the time of his freedom Craddock was a participant in the cloth trade to the Baltic under the auspices of the Eastland Company and the Russia Company, and had developed commercial connections in France, Spain, and the Levant. In the late 1620s he owned £2000 of stock in the East India Company. Craddock's Puritan religious background appears to have been the catalyst for his becoming involved in transatlantic trade. In March 1629 he was listed as a founding member of the newly incorporated Massachusetts Bay Company, and shortly thereafter was elected the company's first governor. Craddock played an important role in the early history of New England: it was he who first proposed that the freemen move permanently to North America and take the company's charter with them. Craddock remained in London but would continue to support his Puritan brethren in the Massachusetts colony by regularly dispatching servants and provisions, and he also owned a large plantation on the Mystic River as an absentee proprietor. Over the course of the 1630s he emerged as a leading figure in the tobacco trade to Virginia, St. Christopher, and Barbados. Craddock's business career demonstrates that those involved in Barbadian trade had commercial interests beyond the Caribbean, in areas as diverse as the North Sea, the North American colonies, the East Indies, and the Mediterranean.¹⁰⁴

As was common in English merchant shipping during the seventeenth century, Craddock was co-owner of the *Abraham* alongside seven other business partners in the City of London. Venturing capital in conjunction with other merchants and sailors minimised the risk to personal wealth if something should go awry during the journey. Together William Pennoyer and one 'Cokayne' owned a quarter share in the ship. Pennoyer, a close business associate of Craddock, was another leading figure in colonial trade during the 1630s. He was heavily involved in the re-export of American tobacco from England to markets in the eastern Mediterranean. Pennoyer will become an important figure in this dissertation, as he was a major investor in the Barbados sugar industry during the 1640s. It is probable that 'Mr Cokayne' was William

¹⁰³ Vivienne Aldous, 'Cokayne, Sir William (1559/60–1626), merchant', *ODNB* (23 September 2004), <https://www.oxforddnb.com/view/10.1093/ref:odnb/9780198614128.001.0001/odnb-9780198614128-e-5824> (Accessed 8 November 2019).

¹⁰⁴ Troy O. Bickham, 'Cradock, Matthew (c. 1590–1641), merchant and colonial investor', *ODNB* (23 September 2004), <https://www.oxforddnb.com/view/10.1093/ref:odnb/9780198614128.001.0001/odnb-9780198614128-e-6562> (Accessed 8 November 2019); Brenner, *Merchants and Revolution*, pp. 137-40; TNA, PROB 11/171/450, 'Will of Matthew Cradocke or Cradock of Caverswall, Staffordshire'.

Cokayne, a relation of Craddock's former master who was mentioned in Craddock's will. Edward Meredith, Thomas Colthurst, and Thomas Stegge each possessed an eighth share in the *Abraham*. Throughout the 1630s Thomas Stegge played a prominent role in the tobacco trade as the Virginia factor for both Matthew Craddock and the ubiquitous London merchant Maurice Thomson. Grace Hardwyn and Andrew Hardy, the ship's master, both owned sixteenth shares in the *Abraham*.¹⁰⁵

In April 1636 the *Abraham* was docked in London, and Andrew Hardy was preparing the vessel for its voyage. Their intended destination was at present undecided, but there was talk of dispatching the vessel to Virginia or New England. Hardy's account book shows that while at London and Gravesend he was busy disbursing money towards refitting the vessel and hiring carpenters to make necessary repairs.¹⁰⁶ A ledger of 'the Cargazoone or goods shipt in the Abraham at London' reveals that an array of manufactured goods and foodstuffs were laden aboard the vessel for sale in the American plantations. Clothes of varying material and quality, shoes, ribbon, rugs, oatmeal, butter, flour, currants, ginger, sugar, nutmeg, pepper, salt, vinegar, liquor, claret wine, nails, pewter dishes, chamber pots, lead, candlesticks, axes, hatchets, hoes, pistols, and ammunition were just some of the items put aboard the ship.¹⁰⁷

Preparations in London took four months, and it was not until late August that the *Abraham* arrived in Kinsale harbour to pick up servants and extra provisions for the transatlantic journey. In the seventeenth century Kinsale was a bustling port town in southeast Ireland and a focal point of English efforts to expand their plantation in the province of Munster. Its convenient location meant that the town was a regular stopping point for vessels making their final preparations for a voyage across the Atlantic, and it became a site regularly exploited by merchants looking to procure indentured servants. Getting people to sign indentures took time and energy, and so Matthew Craddock had sent his factor Thomas Anthony to Kinsale earlier in the year to work towards gathering servants, commodities, and provisions for the *Abraham*.¹⁰⁸ Anthony wrote to Craddock in early August of 1636 to explain how he had 'mad[e] divers of

¹⁰⁵ Brenner, *Merchants and Revolution*, pp. 137-39; TNA, PROB 11/171/450, 'Will of Matthew Cradocke or Cradock of Caverswall, Staffordshire'.

¹⁰⁶ TNA, HCA 30/636/3.

¹⁰⁷ TNA, HCA 30/636/5/2, 'A note of the Cargazoone or goods shipt in the Abraham at London'.

¹⁰⁸ TNA, HCA 30/636/5/6; HCA 30/636/5/7; HCA 30/636/5/8.

servants acquainted with our voidag', and was advertising the intended voyage and the pressing need for servants in nearby towns such as Bandon, Cork, and Youghal. Unfortunately for Craddock, Anthony suffered numerous setbacks which hindered his ability to procure servants. A Dutch ship had stopped off at Kinsale earlier in the year and had assembled a large contingent of between 120 and 140 servants to be taken to St. Christopher. Moreover, reports that servants at St. Christopher would be accorded a generous wage meant that 'every one mans mind in the place is bent that waye', hindering Anthony's attempts to encourage people to sign an indenture taking them elsewhere. This was incorrect information, and Craddock quickly set the record straight in a curt reply to Anthony. But the lie about wages for servants living on St. Christopher had proved persuasive in the environs of Kinsale, and stands as a testament to the deceptive acts performed by merchants to get impressionable young men and women to sign indentures. Indeed, it seems that Anthony also resorted to coercion and other questionable methods when procuring servants for Craddock, as there are entries in his account book relating to expenses incurred for plying prospective servants with alcohol and recapturing runaways.¹⁰⁹

In July 1636 Craddock had written to Thomas Anthony in Kinsale explaining that the owners were resolved to dispatch the *Abraham* to Virginia, partly because of the extensive business connections that Thomas Stegge, one of the co-owners of the vessel, maintained there. Stegge had already set sail for Virginia earlier in the year and was primed to receive the servants sent over on the *Abraham*.¹¹⁰ The superior quality of Virginia tobacco, and the lower customs it incurred upon arrival in the port of London when compared to that of St. Christopher and Barbados, probably also played a part in Craddock's decision to specify Virginia as his first choice destination. The fact that the owners of the *Abraham* displayed a clear preference to trade to Virginia over Barbados supports the argument made in the previous section that London merchants were not particularly interested in Barbadian commerce until after the expansion of the island's sugar industry in the mid-1640s.

¹⁰⁹ TNA, HCA 30/636/5/6; HCA 30/636/5/7; HCA 30/636/5/8. For more on coercive 'spiriting' practices, see John Donoghue, "'Out of the Land of Bondage': The English Revolution and the Atlantic Origins of Abolition", *The American Historical Review*, Vol. 115, No. 4, (2010), pp. 943–974; Wareing, *Indentured Migration*, pp. 163–184.

¹¹⁰ TNA, HCA 30/636/6 Book E, Thomas Anthony to Matthew Craddock and Company, 19 July 1636.

On 7 November 1636 the *Abraham* departed Kinsale, and was bound for Virginia with 56 servants and a variety of commodities expected to turn a profit in America. After sailing 276 miles, or roughly one-tenth of the way to Virginia, the vessel was ‘mett with contrary winds and foull weathers and a very leeke shippe’. This misfortune forced the master of the *Abraham* to turn back and put in at Cowes harbour on the Isle of Wight for repairs, where the vessel arrived on 22 November and remained for over a month. Given the significant delays which the expedition had suffered, the London merchants who owned the vessel thought it too late in the year to travel to Virginia and find a good market. Thomas Anthony himself later admitted how ‘we weare desirous to have gonn for Virginea’, but that ‘we doutted in making our voiadge by the resson that ther have bine so many ships laden from thence and dout full that wee suld not procure our lading but in longe time’.¹¹¹ New instructions were given to ‘goe for St Christophers or the Barbados’, and to that end Craddock and his co-partners provided ‘letters of assistance in eather place’. After a long voyage, which lasted just over a month, the *Abraham* reached Carlisle Bay on the southwest coast of Barbados on 25 January 1637.

The first thing Thomas Anthony did upon the arrival of the *Abraham* at Barbados was to get in touch with the business contacts of his merchant employers, who it was hoped would assist them in selling their commodities. Copies of William Pennoyer’s letters of introduction to two of his contacts on Barbados, George Bowyer and Thomas Ball, have survived, and highlight the importance of reputation and trust in facilitating long distance trade in the seventeenth century. In a letter to Thomas Ball, one of his factors on Barbados, Pennoyer declared that ‘thes shippe belongeth to me and Frinds of myne merchants of London, and therefore I dow in treat you to asiste the merchant & mr the best you cann to put of thear passingers and comoditys for such Comodityes is fit to be had’.¹¹² Pennoyer’s reputation as a wealthy and powerful merchant in the City of London, who possessed many connections in the American plantations, meant that his letter of recommendation carried great weight on Barbados.¹¹³ Indeed, Thomas Anthony

¹¹¹ TNA, HCA 30/636/6 Book E, Thomas Anthony to Matthew Craddock, 13 February 1636/37.

¹¹² TNA, HCA 30/636/6 Book E, William Pennoyer to Thomas Ball, 26 November 1636. In the deed records at the Barbados Department of Archives, Thomas Ball is described as a ‘Barbados merchant’ of St. Lucy parish. BDA, RB 3/7, p. 174.

¹¹³ On the importance of reputation to credit relationships in the early modern economy, see Muldrew, *Economy of Obligation*.

would later inform Craddock that he had ‘delivered Mr Wm Pennoyers lettar to Capt George Boyear according to direction’, and that Bowyer ‘duth assest us, and will be a great helpe for that he is a justis of this part’. With the help of Pennoyer’s contacts on Barbados, who held public office in the colony and were therefore of high standing, Thomas Anthony and the rest of the *Abraham*’s crew began to unload their goods at a storehouse ‘neer unto the Indian Bridge’, in the centre of modern-day Bridgetown.¹¹⁴

Three days after their arrival on Barbados, James Hooke (who like Thomas Anthony was also a factor on the *Abraham*), put the indentured servants procured in Kinsale up for auction.¹¹⁵ Servants were the most valuable commodities shipped on the *Abraham*, and also those most coveted on Barbados, and it is therefore unsurprising that the factors prioritised the sale of their human cargo. The most powerful members of Barbadian society were given first choice. On 28 January 1637, Governor Hawley, President Pierce, Edward Cranfield, and Francis Skeet purchased most of the male servants, who were generally favoured over their female counterparts because of their superior strength and endurance which was useful when performing plantation work. Due to his position of power and high standing within the colony, Governor Hawley was given preferential treatment, paying only 450 lb. of tobacco per servant, which was less than the going rate of 500 lb. paid by everybody else. It was well known that Hawley used his political influence to accumulate property for himself in the colony, and in 1640 was reported to be heavily indebted because he had ‘ingaged himself for plantations and other goods and servants unto merchants’.¹¹⁶ The remaining servants shipped on the *Abraham*, most of whom were women, were bought-up by planters the following day. The 56 servants shipped from Kinsale had all been sold within the space of two days, generating a total of 24,650 lb. of tobacco for Craddock (see Table 1.2, below).

¹¹⁴ TNA, HCA 30/636/6 Book E, Thomas Anthony to Matthew Craddock, 13 February 1636/37.

¹¹⁵ TNA, HCA 30/636/6 Book C, ‘A Journall taken by me J: H: [James Hooke] of all my dealings in merchandize at Barbados’.

¹¹⁶ NRS, Hay Papers, GD34/924/24, Peter Hay to Archibald and James Hay, 29 September 1640.

production began and credit took on even greater significance due to the capital-intensive nature of this process. All the goods from the *Abraham* were sold in exchange for tobacco, which appears to have been Craddock and his factors' preferred commodity. Thomas Anthony reported that 'sundry men would willingly put of ther cotton wools wheareof is great plenty in thes Iland', but he seems to have only accepted tobacco as a form of payment.¹¹⁹ James Hooke's receipt books disclose how varying quantities of tobacco were laden aboard the *Abraham* at regular increments over the course of several months (Table A2, Appendix 1). This was probably due to the limited capacity of their storehouse, but may also have been intended to prevent spoilage and theft.¹²⁰

In late May 1637 preparations were underway for the return voyage of the *Abraham*. Decisions were being made about which of the commodities that remained unsold should be left on Barbados with James Hooke, and which should be transported back to Europe with Thomas Anthony.¹²¹ On 2 June a charterparty was signed authorising the vessel to transport its cargo of tobacco from Barbados to either London, Middelburg, or Hamburg. Asymmetric flows of business information between England and the American plantations meant that it was common in the seventeenth century for merchant vessels to wait until they were closer to Europe before deciding which market they would sell their goods in. This decision-making process was reflected in open-ended charterparties, such as that drawn up for the *Abraham*. Ports in continental Europe, such as Hamburg, Middelburg, Amsterdam, and Genoa, were important locations for merchants offloading tobacco and cotton from Barbados in the 1630s due to lower customs duties and the superior rates merchants there offered for these commodities when compared to the price they could command in England.

Along with the tobacco generated from the sale of servants and commodities for Matthew Craddock and Company, 12 Barbados planters were given permission to freight their own tobacco on the *Abraham*, for which they paid a rate of 2.5 pence per lb. of tobacco, generating Craddock and his co-partners a further

¹¹⁹ TNA, HCA 30/636/6 Book E, Thomas Anthony to Matthew Craddock, 13 February 1636/37.

¹²⁰ TNA, HCA 30/636/6 Book A, 'James Hooke's receipt book of tobacco received into the store house [in Barbados]?'.

¹²¹ TNA, HCA 30/636/2, 'Abraham Barbados Accounts'.

£578. The largest consignment belonged to Peter Hay, the receiver of the rents on Barbados for the Earl of Carlisle, who freighted 25,938 lb. Other planters, including John Brookehaven, Robert Moore, and Henry Hammon also shipped their own tobacco on Craddock's vessel (see Table A3, Appendix 1).¹²² Nine people took passage to Europe on the *Abraham*, most of whom were planters travelling with the tobacco they had freighted on the vessel. Robert Moore even journeyed with his wife and two young children. Permitting Barbados planters to travel on the vessel back to Europe raised £28 for Craddock and his business partners.¹²³

After receiving directions from Craddock to sell his tobacco in the Low Countries, the *Abraham* arrived in Middelburg on 29 July 1637. Prospects for finding a good market for Barbados tobacco in Europe were poor in the late 1630s. As has been mentioned in the previous section, the low prices fetched by tobacco entered into the port of London, along with high duties, often drove English merchants such as Craddock to look to the continent for a better market. Jeremy William Ashman, Craddock's factor in Middelburg, was there to welcome the *Abraham* upon her arrival. Unfortunately for the owners of the *Abraham*, the price of tobacco in Middelburg fell steeply over the space of three weeks, from 13 stuivers per pound of tobacco to just 6 stuivers, after their inferior Barbados tobacco flooded the market.¹²⁴ Such were the uncertainties of the seventeenth-century marketplace. Craddock subsequently decided to store his tobacco at a warehouse in Amsterdam until the market improved, as it looked like the revenue generated from its sale would not even cover customs and freight charges. The voyage of the *Abraham* to Barbados had been a losing venture, and as Kenneth Andrews aptly states, exemplified 'the hazards of the early plantations trade, a rough and risky free-for-all, with few winners and many losers'.¹²⁵

¹²² TNA, HCA 30/636/5/3, 'Mr Ashmans Account for ship Abrahams freight in Middelboro'. Things get complicated when the *Abraham* reaches Middelburg, as there were different methods of weighing and measuring tobacco in London and Amsterdam, resulting in two different weights being given in the sources. For the purposes of clarity, only the English weight is being referenced here.

¹²³ TNA, HCA 30/636/2, 'Abraham Barbados Accounts'.

¹²⁴ TNA, HCA 30/636/6 Book E, Thomas Anthony to Matthew Craddock, 31 July 1637, 4 August 1637, 11 August 1637, 18 August 1637 & Matthew Craddock to Thomas Anthony, 4 August 1637; HCA 30/636/6 Book G; HCA 30/636/5/3, 'Mr Ashmans Account for ship Abrahams freight in Middelro August 1637'; HCA 30/636/5/4; HCA 30/636/2, 'Abraham Barbados Accounts'.

¹²⁵ Andrews, *Ships, Money, and Politics*, p. 104.

Conclusion

This chapter has explored mercantile activity on Barbados between 1627 and 1643. In doing so, it has introduced several themes and topics which will be explored in greater detail in subsequent chapters, and has challenged Menard's revisionist argument about the dynamism of the Barbadian economy in the 1630s. Two syndicates of London merchants, led by Sir William Courteen and Marmaduke Rawdon, were involved in the colonisation of Barbados between 1627 and 1630. But over the course of the next decade, the available evidence suggests that English merchants did not sustain this initial interest. During the 1630s, English merchants were not nearly as deeply involved with the colony as they would become following the expansion of the sugar industry. This was because English merchants preferred to trade to Virginia, where they had already established networks of credit with planters and could receive better quality tobacco. Dutch traders and markets were therefore of increased significance to the economy of Barbados in the period from 1630-43 than in subsequent decades. They were a more regular presence in the waters of the eastern Caribbean due to their 'cruising' ventures launched from Brazil, and often made ad hoc visits to Barbados. Equally important was the fact that markets in the Low Countries offered a superior price for tobacco than those in England, and so merchants and planters preferred to sell their low-grade Barbados tobacco there.

These findings cast doubt over Menard's assertion that the colony was undergoing an export boom as early as the 1630s. There is almost no evidence to suggest that there was marked economic expansion and large numbers of enslaved Africans on Barbados before 1641-43. It is true that by the early 1640s planters on Barbados were cultivating a wider range of commodities for export to Europe, including cotton, indigo, ginger, and sugar. While this certainly represented a diversification in agricultural production and is a testament to the remarkable ability of Barbados planters to innovate, it does not in itself provide support for Menard's conclusion that Barbados was undergoing an export boom.

The available evidence suggests instead that such efforts towards diversification were a direct result of the stagnating (or possibly even declining) economic health of the colony between 1630 and 1641, and desperation on the part of planters to find a profitable export commodity that would drive increased merchant traffic to their shores. Moreover, it was the sugar industry which precipitated the rapid commercial upturn and the growth of African slavery seen on the island from 1643 onwards. The evidence of merchant involvement with Barbados suggests that it might be better, therefore, to temper some of the conclusions drawn by revisionists in the last thirty years about the health of the Barbadian economy. There certainly were opportunities for time-expired indentured servants to attain social advancement and for planters to steadily expand their plantations by aggregating land, but it would be an overstatement to suggest that this was the consequence of an economic boom and not just the process of colonial development at a modest scale.

Chapter Two. London Merchants, the English Civil War, and the Financing of the Barbados Sugar Boom, 1643-1660

During the debates over the Navigation Act in the 1650s, one tract justified the mercantilist policies supported by London merchants by claiming that the English islands in the Caribbean ‘were planted and grown upp to this degree of prosperitie, by the exceeding charge and expence of the English Merchants and Adventurers’. Although the anonymous authors recognised and valued the contributions of planters, especially ‘their Ingenuitye and their Industrie [in] the settling of Plantacons’, they remained adamant that these sugar-producing colonies would not have reached their current levels of prosperity ‘if the merchants had not sowed it (as it were) with their Gold’.¹ Russell Menard has presented compelling evidence from the deed books at the Barbados Department of Archives to support this interpretation. He has argued it was English merchants, as opposed to Dutch traders, who were most significant in extending credit and supplying enslaved Africans to planters on Barbados in the mid-seventeenth century. As Menard notes, the transition to sugar would have been much slower and less forceful on Barbados if it had not been for the heavy involvement of English merchants based in the City of London.²

Seeing as the broad question of *who* financed the sugar boom has been answered satisfactorily by Menard, the first section of this chapter will explore in greater detail where the capital which they invested originated. By tracing the careers of these merchants, and placing their Caribbean investments into broader context, it will be argued that the capital used to finance the expansion of sugar and slavery on Barbados came from many different domestic and overseas sources, and thus had global origins. This challenges Robert Brenner’s argument that ‘to supply the unprecedented capital requirements for founding [sugar] plantations, the merchants relied on the wealth they had already accumulated in American enterprise’.³

¹ BL, Add. Ms. 11411, ff. 3-5, ‘The state of the difference as it is pressed between the merchants and the planters in relation to free trade att the Charibee Islands. And the meanes of reconciliation and general satisfaction proposed’, n.d. [1655-1658].

² Menard, *Sweet Negotiations*, pp. 49-61.

³ Brenner, *Merchants and Revolution*, p. 162.

The second section of this chapter will investigate *why* London merchants chose to invest so heavily in the economy of Barbados during the 1640s. New insights into the Barbados sugar boom can be gained by exploring the historiography of early modern England. Most merchants in the City of London who invested in Caribbean plantation economies in the mid-seventeenth century never themselves visited the American colonies. Historians have not placed enough emphasis, therefore, on how their business preferences were influenced by events occurring in England itself. They have developed an American-focused explanation for why merchants invested in Barbados, which has failed to consider how the transformative events occurring in England during the 1640s shaped the financial decisions taken by merchants. London merchants diversified their business portfolios in response to the political and economic uncertainty generated by the Civil War. Barbados, which was undergoing a commercial boom following the collapse of the Brazilian sugar industry, is one of the places where merchants secured their capital in the 1640s. There were impressive profits to be made from speculating in sugar production and owning enslaved Africans, and Barbados was also a safe location to invest capital. This was partly due to inherent geographical and environmental features which protected the island from some of the usual risks to colonial enterprise. But most important, it will be argued, was the fact that the colony's government articulated a policy of neutrality in the Civil War.

1. Where did the merchant capital invested in the Barbados sugar industry during the 1640s originate?

Those who intended to venture in the Barbados sugar economy required adequate funding to begin operations. Constructing sugar refineries on newly-bought plantations was a capital-intensive procedure. Entrepreneurs keen to speculate in the seventeenth-century sugar industry were faced with a series of large initial expenditures. Besides purchasing a plantation, prospective planters also had to fund the construction of a mill, boiling house, still house, and curing house. An assortment of agricultural tools and equipment needed for the processing of sugar cane also had to be bought. New plantation owners

were required to obtain handsaws, hoes, rollers for the mill, cisterns, ladles, skimmers, copper stills, cooling basins, and a multitude of earthenware pots. One of the most expensive costs for start-up sugar planters was procuring servants or enslaved Africans. The extraordinary demand for labour amplified the purchase price of skilled and unskilled workers. On top of the high entry costs to begin growing and processing sugar, planters were also obliged to have a large pool of liquid capital to cover the annual expenses of maintaining a sugar plantation in the tropics. Replacing dead or lame indentured servants, enslaved Africans, and livestock made the largest dent into a planter's annual income. Then there were maintenance costs associated with purchasing fuel for the furnaces, fixing broken machinery, and repairing damaged tools (for a brief description of the operation of the Barbados sugar industry in the seventeenth century, see Appendix 3).⁴

Given the high capital outlay required to initiate sugar production, the question of who financed the Barbados sugar boom, and where the capital they invested originated, is an important topic. Larry Gragg has analysed some of the English merchants who financed the development of sugar production on Barbados during the 1640s and 1650s by dividing them by place of origin. This has highlighted how merchants who operated from towns with a strong maritime heritage, such as London, Bristol, and Boston (New England), all contributed to the transition to a sugar economy on Barbados.⁵ Here, though, I will take a slightly different approach and divide these English merchants into different categories according to their trading activities in the 1630s and early 1640s (before they speculated in Barbados sugar). These divisions are somewhat artificial, because some of the merchants discussed held investments in a variety of different overseas enterprises in this decade. But studying merchant careers is still helpful, as it is suggestive of where the capital that merchants invested in the sugar boom originated.

A database of all 254 of the English merchants who are known to have been involved with the Barbadian economy between 1640 and 1660 has been created (see Table A4, Appendix 2). In the database there are five measures of how a merchant could be 'involved' with Barbados: owning a plantation on the island,

⁴ Sheridan, *Sugar and Slavery*, pp. 264-266; Gragg, *Englishmen Transplanted*, pp. 104-105.

⁵ Gragg, *Englishmen Transplanted*, ch. 7.

participating in the servant trade, participating in the transatlantic slave trade, participating in the provisioning trade, and petitioning the English government as a 'Barbados merchant'. There are 23 merchants for whom there is documentary evidence that they partook in three or more of these activities.⁶ They have therefore been identified as the most important merchant investors in the sugar boom, and it is the careers of these merchants which I will now investigate.

These 23 merchant financiers of the Barbados sugar boom can be divided into six clusters. First, are the merchants who were previously involved in American trade, including Maurice Thomson, William Pennoyer, Michael Davison (Pennoyer's former apprentice), Richard Batson, Thomas Frere, and George Pasfield. These men had already developed business ties with tobacco and cotton planters on Barbados, making their investments in the island's sugar industry a natural progression.⁷ Not all the merchants involved in the tobacco and cotton trade to Barbados came to invest in sugar production, however. There is no surviving evidence, for instance, that Joseph Hawes, a merchant who owned 94 percent of the 64,000 lb. of Barbados tobacco imported into London in 1638, had any involvement in the sugar boom.⁸ Nor is there any indication that the merchant syndicate who were granted the massive 10,000-acre plantation on Barbados in 1630 by the Earl of Carlisle speculated in sugar a decade later.

Second, are the merchants who had been involved in West African trade, in some cases under the auspices of the Guinea Company, and who were mostly interested in Barbados as a market for selling enslaved Africans. This group comprised of John Wood, Thomas Parris, and Samuel Farmer.⁹ Third, are the participants in the trade to the East Indies and the Mediterranean, such as Andrew Riccard, William

⁶ These 23 merchants were: Thomas Applewhaite, Richard Batson, Nicholas Blake, John Colleton, Edwin Brown, Edward Bushell, Michael Davison, Samuel Farmer, Thomas Frere, Thomas Kendall, Peter Lear, Robert Lewellin, Mark Mortimer, Martin Noell, Thomas Parris, George Pasfield, William Pennoyer, Andrew Riccard, Maurice Thomson, John Vincent, James White, William Williams, John Wood.

⁷ Brenner aptly demonstrates the participation of these merchants in the American tobacco trade during the 1630s and early 1640s. Brenner, *Merchants and Revolution*, ch. 4, esp. pp. 162-163.

⁸ For the tobacco imported by Joseph Hawes in 1638, see Brenner, *Merchants and Revolution*, p. 138 (fn. 78). Data derived from the London Port Book for Imports, 1640, TNA, E 190/43/5.

⁹ John Wood's prior involvement in West African trade will be explored in detail below. In a 1656 deposition Thomas Parris stated that he visited Barbados in 1628, soon after the colony's founding. But the available evidence suggests he did not stay for long, and instead returned to London and became a major transatlantic slave trader with his brother, the New England merchant John Parris. *Complete Book of Emigrants*, p. 466. For the Bristol merchant Samuel Farmer's slave trading connections, see Gragg, *Englishmen Transplanted*, pp. 136-137.

Williams, and Edwin Browne.¹⁰ Fourth, are the English merchants who had previously been heavily involved in the sugar trade within the Portuguese Empire, including Edward Bushell and Thomas Kendall, who probably looked to Barbados as a new site for sugar production following the decline in the Brazilian industry.¹¹ Fifth, are the participants in the cloth trade in woollen manufactures to Northern Europe, France, and Spain. Thomas Applewhaite, John Colleton, and James White were all involved in this trade, the most traditional sector of England's overseas commerce, prior to developing an interest in Barbados.¹² Sixth, are the men who have no recorded background in overseas trade before their investments in Barbados. Martin Noell, Nicholas Blake, Peter Lear, Robert Lewellin, Mark Mortimer, and John Vincent all fall into this category, and it seems likely therefore that the opportunity to invest in the Barbados sugar boom prompted their participation in overseas commerce.¹³

The account books of the merchants who financed the sugar boom have not survived. This makes it impossible to determine with certainty where the money they invested in land and enslaved Africans on the island was generated. We can, however, improve our understanding of this historical process by tracing merchant careers and placing their investments in the Barbados sugar industry into broader

¹⁰ For the involvement of Riccard, Williams, and Browne in the trade to the East Indies, see *CCMEIC*, Vol. 2, p. 148, 150, 331. For the service of Riccard and Williams on the court of directors of the Levant Company in 1640, see TNA, SP 105/149, f. 215. Edwin Browne was also a Levant Company director. See Brock, 'The Company Director', p. 380.

¹¹ Edward Bushell's participation in the Brazilian sugar trade will be explored in detail below. Thomas Kendall was resident in Lisbon in 1638 and involved in the Brazil trade. See TNA, SP 89/4, ff. 17-18.

¹² Thomas Applewhaite is described as a former cloth merchant in Gragg, *Englishman Transplanted*, p. 135. For John Colleton's involvement in the Exeter cloth trade prior to emigrating to Barbados, see J. E. Buchanan, 'The Colleton Family and the Early History of South Carolina and Barbados' (PhD dissertation, University of Edinburgh, 1989), pp. 9-43. James White, a merchant of Tower Hill in London, was a Master of the Clothworkers Company in 1641. 'Records of London's Livery Companies Online', https://www.londonroll.org/event/?company=clw&event_id=CLLL25777 (Accessed 11/09/2019).

¹³ Martin Noell began his business career as a scrivener in London: his background will be explored in further detail below. Mark Mortimer is an obscure figure. He was a close associate of Noell in Barbadian affairs, and it is therefore possible that he also began life as a scrivener. Nicholas Blake is another obscure London merchant, and other than the fact he invested in the Irish Adventurers Scheme, he does not appear to have been involved in overseas trade prior to purchasing plantations on Barbados in the mid-1640s. John Vincent is described in various Barbados deeds as a 'London grocer' and elsewhere as a 'saltmaster'. It is probable, therefore, that he dealt in the wholesale of salt prior to his investments in Barbados sugar. He may also have been related to William Vincent, a London merchant who was a member of the East India and Levant companies, and who also became involved in Barbadian commerce. For John Vincent, see BDA, RB3/2, pp. 510-13; TNA, SP 16/233, f. 31. Robert Lewellin received his freedom of the Salter's Company in 1639, and like Vincent probably also began his career in domestic salt wholesaling. For Lewellin, see 'Records of London's Livery Companies Online', https://www.londonroll.org/event/?company=slt&event_id=SLMM5172 (Accessed 11/09/2019). Other than the fact he grew up in Devon, I have been unable to find any information on Peter Lear's business activities in the 1630s and early 1640s. This is extremely surprising, because in 1660 he had become a merchant of some repute and was handed a baronetcy by Charles II.

context. A detailed exploration of the career of one merchant from each category, which considers both the domestic and global dimensions of their economic activities between 1630 and 1670, will now be developed.

Some of the men who invested in the sugar boom have already received a great deal of attention from historians of the merchant community of early modern England. As pre-eminent overseas traders in the City of London in the first half of the seventeenth century, the careers of Maurice Thomson and William Pennoyer have already been described in detail by historians such as Robert Brenner, for example. The diverse commercial activities which Thomson and Pennoyer participated in epitomise how the merchants who invested in the Barbados sugar boom had both domestic and global business interests. In the 1630s and 1640s Maurice Thomson was one of London's leading colonial traders, importing 113,000 lb. of American tobacco in 1638, more than any other merchant. He subscribed to the Irish Adventurers Scheme, financed the colonisation of St. Christopher, traded to West Africa, and was involved in East Indian interloping.¹⁴ William Pennoyer possessed a similarly broad business portfolio. He was principally a tobacco merchant trading to North America and the Caribbean, but was also an interloper in Mediterranean trade, pioneering, in Brenner's words, the 'Virginia-England-Levant tobacco reexport commerce'. Pennoyer was also an investor in the Irish Adventurers Scheme, heavily involved in the transatlantic slave trade, and another participant in interloping commerce to the East Indies.¹⁵ Moreover, both men were key supporters of the Parliamentary government during the 1640s, and were therefore appointed to various offices to farm the customs and excise.¹⁶ By 1647 Thomson and Pennoyer co-owned a Barbados plantation, and were seeking permission from Parliament to export horses to the colony to drive their sugar mills.¹⁷

¹⁴ Brenner, *Merchants and Revolution*, pp. 118-20, 125-29, 140 (fn. 88), 164-165, 173-175, 402; Roper, *Advancing Empire*, pp. 32-33, 57, 74-76, 79-81, 110.

¹⁵ Brenner, *Merchants and Revolution*, p. 137, 153, 163, 402; Roper, *Advancing Empire*, p. 76.

¹⁶ James Scott Wheeler, *The Making of a World Power: War and the Military Revolution in Seventeenth-Century England* (Stroud, 1999), ch. 6, 7 and especially pp. 130-136.

¹⁷ 'The humble petition of William Pennoyer', 14 October 1647 & 'The humble petition of Maurice Thompson and Company', 23 October 1647, in *Proceedings and Debates*, pp. 196-197.

The six case studies explored in detail below have been selected because there has been less previously written on these merchants. The prosopographical study developed here is also more complete than previous analyses because it more fully contextualises the professional lives of these merchants, considering both their domestic and global trading activities and the offices they held within the English government. It is nonetheless important to highlight that what follows are not comprehensive business histories. It is better to view this prosopographical analysis and six-fold categorisation as a portrayal of how diverse the business portfolios of the English merchants who financed the sugar boom were.

Richard Batson (? – 1672)

The career of Richard Batson underscores how merchants with a background in the tobacco trade to the American colonies helped to finance the Barbados sugar boom. Batson was born into an obscure family from Wiltshire. He was not apprenticed into a livery company, and although the origins of his career as a merchant remain uncertain, it seems that he began his professional life as a cutler. By the mid-1630s he had become involved in the tobacco and provisioning trade to Virginia, Bermuda, and the Caribbean, often working in partnership with other London merchants such as Maurice Thomson, Samuel Vassall, and William Pennoyer.¹⁸ His trading interests in the Atlantic also extended to privateering ventures, which he had begun to participate in by 1637. Possibly because of the personal connections he possessed with powerful merchants within the City of London, by 1640 Batson had established himself as one of the most significant English traders to the American plantations. That year he imported 15,000 lb. of Virginia tobacco, for instance. There is also some isolated evidence that Batson worked with William Courteen and Maurice Thomson in financing ships which were interloping in the East Indies, but the extent to which he was involved in this trade is not clear. We do know, however, that he subscribed to the Second General Voyage of the East India Company in 1647. As far as his domestic business activities were

¹⁸ Brenner, *Merchants and Revolution*, pp. 278-279.

concerned, Batson was involved in the production and trade in glassware within England, and in the early 1640s challenged the glassmaking patent which permitted Robert Mansell to monopolise the trade.¹⁹

Like many of his business partners in London, Batson supported the Parliamentary cause in the Civil War, perhaps because of his godly religious sensibilities. In conjunction with 150 other parishioners living in St. Dunstan's-in-the-East, Richard Batson signed a petition in late March 1642 calling for the appointment of John Simpson as their new minister. Simpson was one of the most radical congregationalist ministers in London, which suggests that Batson held puritan proclivities, especially as he played a role in the governance of the parish in subsequent years.²⁰ It is surprising, therefore, that Batson does not appear in Tai Liu's list of London puritans, and that he did not invest in the Irish Adventurers scheme, a programme to expropriate Irish land which was motivated by a strong puritan impulse.²¹ Moreover, unlike some of his peers in the London merchant community, Batson did not secure positions on committees relating to trade and colonial affairs during the Interregnum, nor did he receive an office to farm the excises. He was, however, appointed as a commissioner for Billingsgate ward in 1648 to collect assessments imposed by the Parliamentary government for the maintenance of the army.²² Although he occasionally exchanged letters with Secretary of State John Thurloe, based on this wider evidence, it appears that Batson did not have strong connections within the Parliamentary, Commonwealth, and Protectorate regimes.²³

Richard Batson began a commercial relationship with Barbados around the year 1640. It was the cotton trade which first attracted his interest in the colony. In 1640 Batson received (along with his co-partner

¹⁹ TNA, HCA 24/101, f. 122; Brenner, *Merchants and Revolution*, pp. 135-6, 159n, 160, 168, 175, 268. For the EIC's Second General Voyage, see *CCMEIC*, Vol. 3., pp. 342-343, 'A Meeting of the Committees for the Second General Voyage', 17 August 1649. For a summary of the court case which related to a partnership formed between Samuel Vassall, Richard Batson, Edward Wood, and George Menefie, who freighted the Dove to trade for Virginia tobacco in 1637, see TNA, C 2/ChasI/C90/28 or *Complete Book of Emigrants*, p. 217.

²⁰ Brenner, *Merchants and Revolution*, pp. 413-414, 449.

²¹ For Tai Liu's list of London puritans, see Tai Liu, *Puritan London: A Study of Religion and Society in the City Parishes* (Newark, 1986), Appendix B. For a list of investors in the Irish Adventurers Scheme, see Karl S. Bottigheimer, *English Money and Irish Land: The 'Adventurers' in the Cromwellian Settlement of Ireland* (Oxford, 1971), Appendix A.

²² *Acts and Ordinances*, Vol. 1, pp. 1128-1131, 'An Ordinance for the speedy bringing in the Arrears of the Assessments in the City of London and Liberties thereof', 24 April 1648.

²³ *Thurloe Papers*, Vol. 4, p. 318, 'R. Bateson to Secretary Thurloe', 15 December 1655; Bodleian Library, MS Rawl A. 26, p. 56; Bodleian Library, MS Rawl A. 29, p. 280.

Maurice Thomson) 2605 lb. of cotton from two Barbados planters in repayment for a debt, and in the same year his nephew Thomas Batson begins appearing in the Barbados Department of Archives buying and selling land on the island. In 1642 Richard Batson's ship the *Gilbyflower* was due to receive 120 bags of cotton at Barbados on the account of the London merchant Morgan Davies, and in 1644 he dispatched the *Planter* (co-owned with Edmond Keysar and Thomas Clarke) to Barbados to collect 13,500 lb. of cotton from Peter Hay.²⁴ He had been aware of the profits that could be made by trading in sugar as early as 1640, when he instructed one of his correspondents 'if any duch shipps or others should chance to come in Barbados yt bring either sugers or any other good comodities yt you know are vendable to venture the buying of three fowre or five or six hundred pounds worth starling money to be paid by my hand'.²⁵

With the advent of the island's own sugar industry in the mid-1640s, Richard Batson began to escalate his involvement with Barbados. He speculated in sugar production by purchasing large tracts of land in the colony and financed trading ventures to supply the island with horses from Norway. Batson's participation in slaving expeditions on the West Africa coast began as early as 1647. His involvement with the transatlantic slave trade to Barbados deepened over the course of the 1650s, and by 1660 he was one of the leading suppliers of enslaved Africans to the colony. Richard Batson's business interests on Barbados were administered by his nephew Thomas Batson, his brother Henry Batson, and his attorneys William Tickle and Nicholas Martin, all of whom relocated to the island during the sugar boom.²⁶ Following his investments in Barbados sugar, Batson diversified his trading interests. In April 1652, for example, he organised a whaling venture to Greenland in conjunction with his business partners James

²⁴ For Richard Batson trading in cotton in the early 1640s, see BDA, RB3/1, pp. 30-31, 414-417, 900. For Thomas Batson's land transactions in 1640, see BDA, RB3/1, p. 795; BDA, RB3/2, p. 353.

²⁵ BDA, RB3/1, p. 417.

²⁶ For the Batson syndicate's landholding interests on Barbados, see BDA, RB3/1, p. 785; BDA, RB3/2, p. 353; BDA, RB3/1, pp. 870-871; BDA, RB3/1, pp. 867-868; BDA, RB3/5, pp. 848-849; BDA, RB3/5, p. 144; BDA, RB3/2, pp. 579-580; BDA, RB3/5, pp. 634-637; BDA, RB3/2, pp. 582-585; BDA, RB3/3, pp. 262-266; BDA, RB3/2, pp. 580-582; BDA, RB3/8, pp. 122-123; BDA, RB3/2, pp. 564-567; BDA, RB3/8, pp. 115-118; *Complete Book of Emigrants*, p. 482. For Richard Batson's involvement in the transatlantic slave trade, see TNA, HCA 13/65, ff. 45-46; TNA, HCA 13/124, ff. 34-36 & ff. 58-60. For his involvement in the Barbados provisioning trade and supplying horses from Norway, see TNA, HCA 13/71, ff. 167-170.

Salmon and Humphrey Beane, co-owners of the *Dove*.²⁷ But the profits from sugar production and Barbados trade remained his main source of revenue during the 1650s and 1660s.

In 1670, when the will of Richard Batson was being executed, Thomas Batson inherited his uncle's 360-acre integrated sugar plantation in the alluvial upland parishes of St. Phillip and St. George. An inventory of Richard Batson's plantation taken upon his death reveals that the business operation had grown extremely prosperous over the years. The plantation possessed its own 'ingenio' for the processing of sugar cane, along with a stock of 157 enslaved Africans, 8 white servants, 50 sheep, 36 cattle, 6 horses, and 6 asses.²⁸ Batson died a merchant made rich by the Barbados sugar industry and African slavery. He had operated outside of corporate monopolies for most of his career, preferring instead to trade in the unregulated waters of the Caribbean.

John Wood (? – 1661)

John Wood, a longstanding member of the Guinea Company, serves as a good example of how merchants with commercial interests in West Africa contributed to the Barbados sugar boom. In fact, the evidence we have of Wood trading in enslaved Africans to Barbados as early as 1641 means that we can be quite confident in asserting that he was one of the architects of the English transatlantic slave trading networks which would bring millions of enslaved Africans to the Caribbean over the next two centuries. John Wood began his business career as an apprentice to Humphrey Slaney in the 1620s, for whom he served overseas as a factor on the 'River Cerbero' (the Sierra Leone river). This was an important centre of trade for desirable commodities such as redwood, primarily due to the natural harbour at the river's

²⁷ TNA, HCA 13/125. A similar voyage was undertaken in 1654, as evidenced by documentation requesting protection from impress for 14 harpooners travelling to Greenland on a ship owned by Batson and Beane. See TNA, SP 18/67, f. 108.

²⁸ Out of a total of 157 enslaved Africans, 62 were male, 63 were female, and 32 were children. The names of every servant and slave are also recorded. The plantation was situated in one of the most ideal places on Barbados for sugar production. It neighboured Henry Drax's Drax Hall Plantation. BDA, RB3/8, ff. 58-63.

estuary, but also because the river allowed seafaring vessels to penetrate 25 miles into the interior.

Testimony recorded in the High Court of Admiralty reveals how during his time as an agent for Slaney in Sierra Leone John Wood developed extensive mercantile contacts in the region, laying the foundation for his later commercial success as a London-based Africa trader.²⁹ Humphrey Slaney was pivotal in incorporating four new merchants from among his personal business circle into the Guinea Company in the second half of the 1620s. These men included his son-in-law William Cloberry, the brothers Nicholas and Samuel Crispe, and his former apprentice John Wood. Together this group effectively ran the company for the next decade, using its monopoly to exert a heavy influence over Anglo-Africa trade and to protect their private interests from outside competition. Wood returned to West Africa for a brief time from 1638-39 as the company's chief factor at their new headquarters of Kormantin on the Gold Coast (near modern day Abandze, Ghana), where he oversaw successful negotiations with the local Fante rulers, securing the right for the company to erect a fort and establish a permanent presence in the region.³⁰

After his arrival back in England John Wood rose to even greater prominence within the Guinea Company and the London merchant community. By the early 1640s some core members had left the company, notably Slaney and Cloberry, while Nicholas Crispe had been forced to withdraw from active involvement in overseas trade after his private estate was sequestered by Parliament due to the support he gave the Stuart monarchy. As one of London's most experienced participants in West African trade, it was John Wood who became governor of the Guinea Company following these departures, guiding it through the political and economic turbulence of the 1640s. During these years the company's monopoly came under increasing assault from independent traders, such as Maurice Thomson and Samuel Vassall, who sought to profit from the trade in both luxuries and enslaved Africans. John Wood was instrumental in incorporating these two competitors into the company over the coming years, which preserved the company's exclusive trading privileges.³¹ Also significant was Wood's role in representing the Guinea

²⁹ TNA, HCA 13/121, 'The personal answers of Henry Futter, Thomas Cust, and George Ireland, made in response to an allegation of John Wood, c. June 1648'. The depositions record how 'that for the space of about twenty years last past the said John Wood hath (by the consent and approbacion of the said negroes) traded in the parts aforesaid for himself and others by whome hee was employed as a factor'.

³⁰ Brenner, *Merchants and Revolution*, pp. 164-5; Julie Svalastog, 'Mastering the worst of trades: England's early Africa companies and their traders, 1618-1672' (PhD dissertation, University of Leiden, 2018), p. 78, 90-91, 96-98.

³¹ Svalastog, 'Mastering the worst of trades', p. 92, 96-99.

Company during an inquest into their finances by a Committee of Accounts in 1644. This investigation was prompted by Parliament's suspicion that Crispe was concealing some of his estate within the company to avoid its seizure from the sequestration authorities.³² Wood's own allegiance in the Civil War is uncertain, but based on this evidence, it appears that he was at least trusted by Parliament. However, he was not deemed important enough to the regime to have been appointed to committees and tax farming offices like some of his counterparts in London. The Guinea Company was issued a new patent in 1651. After this John Wood was replaced as governor by Samuel Vassall, but he nonetheless remained an active participant in trade with West Africa in subsequent years.³³

During his time as a factor, member, and governor of the Guinea Company from the 1620s to the 1650s, John Wood financed numerous trading ventures to the West African coast. Along with other members of the company, he described in a 1652 petition how they had 'adventured abroad on that coast aboute £70,000 with severall ships and pinnace[s] for discoverie and trade, and have yearely vented many manufactories, and returned Gold, hides, wax, Elephants teeth, Redwood, Guinny graine etc to a considerable value'.³⁴ But many of these voyages were met with a mixed degree of success: the high frequency with which Wood's name appears in the records of the High Court of Admiralty is testament to this.³⁵

The earliest record we have of John Wood's involvement with Barbados dates to 1641.³⁶ It seems his commercial connection with the island developed out of his capacity as a member of the Guinea

³² TNA, SP 16/540/4, 'Series of documents relating to the affairs of the Guinea Company, from 18th February 1642-43 to 8th July 1647, but mostly of the year 1644'. See also Svalastog, 'Mastering the worst of trades', pp. 98-105.

³³ The members of the Guinea Company in 1651 were: Samuel Vassall, Maurice Thomson, Rowland Wilson Sr., Rowland Wilson Jr., and John Wood. See Svalastog, 'Mastering the worst of trades', p. 131.

³⁴ TNA, CO 1/11, f. 186.

³⁵ Dorothy O. Shilton and Richard Holworthy, eds, *High Court of Admiralty Examinations 1637-1638* (London, 1932), Case 445; TNA, SP 18/9, f. 192; TNA SP 18/41 f. 60; Elizabeth Donnan, ed., *Documents Illustrative of the Slave Trade to America*, Vol. 1 (Washington, 1930), pp. 126-128, Document 24, 'The Guinea Company to James Pope', 17 September 1651.

³⁶ There is some isolated evidence that John Wood may have had a relationship with the proprietor of Barbados much earlier than this, however. In 1626 Sir Henry Vane wrote to the Earl of Carlisle to recommend to the Earl's favour one of his friends, Capt. John Wood. Whether this is the same John Wood who would later become a member of the Guinea Company and trade in slaves to Barbados is uncertain. TNA, SP 16/121, f. 86.

Company. That year the *Star*, a Guinea Company vessel owned by Nicholas Crispe, Samuel Crispe, and John Wood arrived on Barbados with ‘divers negroes’. Some of them were used by the company to bargain for a parcel of land, the deed for which was possessed in partnership by the Crispe brothers and Wood. News in 1642 that their agent George Read had mismanaged the debts they were owed on the island was received with consternation by the three Guinea Company merchants, and it may have been for this reason that for much of the 1640s and 1650s a more trustworthy factor, Francis Soane (who was John Wood’s nephew) was employed as their Barbados factor.³⁷

Over the course of the 1640s and 1650s John Wood co-ordinated numerous slave trading voyages to Barbados. In December 1651, for example, Wood and other members of the company wrote to James Pope, their factor at the River Gambia, instructing him to buy for their ship the *Supply* ‘as many good lusty negers as shee can well cary and so dispatch her for the Barbados, with Invoice and bill of Ladeing Consigned unto Mr. Francis Soane’. It had been agreed with ‘Mr John Wood that such negers as shall come from the River Gambra in our said Frigot *Supply* that you take them upon his plantation making sale of them so soone as you can for our most advantage for ready payment’.³⁸ It was probably because of his growing dependence on Barbados as a market for enslaved Africans and the fact he also owned land there that John Wood signed two petitions relating to the affairs of the colony.³⁹

Beyond his trade with West Africa and Barbados, John Wood also possessed other business interests. In June 1642 Wood was named as a commissioner for the Additional Sea Venture, a Parliamentary initiative to suppress the Irish Rebellion which had broken out the year before. He subscribed £1685 to the Adventurers scheme, and in the lotteries of 1653-4 was accorded 2712 acres in Leinster and 312 acres in Ulster.⁴⁰ By July 1647 John Wood was becoming involved in trading ventures beyond the Atlantic, investing in the East India Company’s Second General Voyage, for example. Alongside his Guinea

³⁷ BDA, RB3/1, pp. 202-3. For Soane as the Company’s Barbados factor, see Roper, *Advancing Empire*, pp. 82-3; Svalastog, ‘Mastering the worst of trades’, pp. 132-33.

³⁸ Donnan, *Documents Illustrative of the Slave Trade*, Documents 25-27, pp. 129-33.

³⁹ TNA, CO 1/11, f. 62; TNA, CO1/69, A3(1).

⁴⁰ *Acts and Ordinances*, Vol. 1, pp. 9-12, ‘The Ordinance for the Sea Adventure to Ireland’, 17 June 1642; Bottigheimer, *English Money and Irish Land*, Appendix A, p. 130 & Appendix B, p. 213; Brenner, *Merchants and Revolution*, p. 404; Roper, *Advancing Empire*, p. 126.

Company counterpart Maurice Thomson, Wood played a crucial role in the process which saw the integration of the West African and East Indian trades over the next decade. This culminated with the East India Company leasing the Guinea Company's charter to the monopoly over English commerce with West Africa in 1658. Following these successful negotiations, Wood was elected to the directorate of the company alongside fellow Barbados plantation owner James Drax in July 1659.⁴¹ John Wood died in 1661, and was therefore never able to guide this ambitious project to completion.⁴² But over the course of his career he had become one of England's leading Africa traders, earning himself the dubious honour of being a pioneer of the transatlantic slave trade to Barbados.

Andrew Riccard (1603/4 – 1672)

The career of Andrew Riccard demonstrates how merchants with a background in corporations trading to the Mediterranean and East Indies invested in the Barbados sugar boom. This underscores how Brenner's argument that company merchants 'never wished to invest in plantations' needs to be modified.⁴³ Riccard came from a poor family background in Dorset, before moving to London to train to become a merchant, where he was apprenticed into the East India Company. Particularly important for his early career advancement was his marriage to Catherine, daughter of Robert Bateman, who was the treasurer of the EIC and a prominent figure in the City of London. Between 1639 and 1641 he was admitted as an assistant of the Levant Company's court and as a member of the EIC based on service, cementing his reputation as one of the rising stars in Eastern trade. He had also become a Master of the Draper's Company by 1640, and was possibly a member of the Muscovy Company at this time. His stance in the Civil War, at least initially, was to offer support for the King. In the early 1640s Riccard signed two petitions alongside other royalist Levant and East India company traders criticising the actions of the

⁴¹ *CCMEIC*, Vol. 3, p. 275, 342-3; Vol. 4, p. 340; Vol. 5, pp. 277, 333-4; Brenner, *Merchants and Revolution*, p. 176; Svalastog, 'Mastering the worst of trades', pp. 115-6, 124, 137.

⁴² TNA, PROB 11/303/72, 'Will of John Wood, Merchant of London', 14 January 1661.

⁴³ Brenner, *Merchants and Revolution*, p. 271.

common council and condemning the committee of safety for seizing control of the London militia. He did not invest in the Irish Adventurers scheme, and for the remainder of the Civil War there is no evidence to suggest where his political sympathies lay.⁴⁴

Riccard's involvement with trade to the American colonies began with his investment in a 300-acre Barbados plantation in 1646. The tract of land on Barbados was bought in conjunction with his long-time mercantile associate, brother-in-law, and fellow Eastern trader, William Williams, along also with Edwin Browne, another member of the East India Company. Riccard subsequently made an indenture agreement with one Thomas Bason, who was to be his servant on Barbados for the term of ten years. 1646 was a good year for Andrew Riccard, for along with his Barbados investments, he was also elected to the court of directors of the EIC for the first time in July.⁴⁵

Andrew Riccard rose to become a leading member of the London merchant community during the Interregnum, and in subsequent years developed close ties with both the Protectorate and Restoration governments. He became an alderman and served as the sheriff of London in the early 1650s, and in 1654 was elected as an MP. The trade to the East Indies and Levant remained his principal commercial interest. In February 1654 he became the governor of the Levant Company, an office which he retained until 1672. He also served as the deputy governor of the EIC between 1653 and 1660, before becoming governor of that company for three terms from 1660-62, 1666-8, and 1670-72. Despite occupying distinguished offices within the administration of several overseas trading companies, Riccard maintained his business interests in Barbados sugar, and was a signatory of three key petitions penned by the 'Barbados Merchants' during the 1650s and 1660s. It was probably due to his experience in Caribbean affairs that Riccard was invited by Cromwell to serve on the planning committee for the Western Design

⁴⁴ Timothy Venning, 'Riccard, Sir Andrew (1603/4–1672), merchant', *ODNB* (23 September 2004) <https://www.oxforddnb.com/view/10.1093/ref:odnb/9780198614128.001.0001/odnb-9780198614128-e-58151> (Accessed 8 November 2019); Brenner, *Merchants and Revolution*, p. 375. Andrew Riccard, a self-described 'member of Turkey & Muscovy Companies' became the master of Richard Hardy, who was apprenticed into the Drapers Company on 22 July 1640. See *Records of London's Livery Companies Online*. <https://www.londonroll.org/about> (Accessed 15/03/2019). The absence of any court records for the Muscovy Company before the Great Fire in 1666 make it impossible to confirm Riccard's membership.

⁴⁵ For Riccard's Barbados interests, see John Carter Brown Library, Shelf Et647 1 Ms; LMA, MCD Box 5, CLA/024/06/005. For his election to the directorate of the EIC, see *CCMEIC*, Vol. 3., p. 153.

alongside Maurice Thomson, Martin Noell, and William Williams (also an EIC and Levant Company trader). It was these merchants who specified that Spanish America should be the target for the revolutionary state's military campaign. They also helped to supply weapons and provisions for the invasion force. A 1670 petition of 'Merchants and Freeholders of Jamaica residing in London' suggests that Riccard even extended his involvement in Caribbean commerce beyond Barbados, and owned land on Jamaica once the colony had been seized from the Spanish.⁴⁶

After the Restoration he subscribed to the successor of the Guinea Company, the Royal Adventurers Trading into Africa. Escalating English involvement in the transatlantic slave trade was a firm objective of this newly incorporated company, further demonstrating Riccard's commitment to Atlantic and Caribbean trade.⁴⁷ In 1660 he was also appointed by Charles II to serve on both the Council for Foreign Plantations and the Council of Trade.⁴⁸ Andrew Riccard, who was born into humble beginnings, died in 1672 as one of the most powerful figures in London's community of overseas traders. This was principally due to his longstanding involvement in the trade to the East Indies and the Mediterranean. But his Barbados investments in the mid-1640s did come at a crucial point in his career. The capital generated through the sugar boom, and the personal connections he made with merchants and planters involved in Caribbean commerce, accelerated his rising position in the City of London.

⁴⁶ For the Barbados petitions, see TNA CO 1/11, f. 62; TNA, CO 1/12, f. 42; TNA, CO 1/20, f. 328. The content of these and other petitions will be explored in Chapter Four. For the Western Design committee, see *Thurloe Papers*, Vol. 2, p. 542, 'Mr Andrew Riccard &c. to the protector', 14 August 1654; *Thurloe Papers*, Vol. 2, pp. 571-574, 'A list of the ships provisions, presented to his highness', [n.d. c. 1654-55]; *Thurloe Papers*, Vol. 3, pp. 203-204, 'Commissioners for the southern expedition to the protector' and 'Provisions to be made for the West Indies', 7 March 1654/55. For the Jamaica petition, see TNA, CO 1/25, f. 227.

⁴⁷ Donnan, *Documents Illustrative of the Slave Trade*, pp. 169-172, Document 48, 'A List of the Royal Adventurers of England Trading to Africa, 1667'

⁴⁸ TNA, CO 1/14, f. 142; TNA, CO 1/23, f. 161.

Edward Bushell (c. 1620 – 1693)

The career of Edward Bushell highlights how English merchants with transnational trading interests in Brazil came to participate in the Barbados sugar boom. Bushell became a prolific London merchant in the 1660s. However, only Charles Boxer has previously discussed Bushell in his article on English shipping in the Brazil trade, and even then, he only elicited a brief mention.⁴⁹ Edward Bushell was born around the year 1620. The origins of his business career are uncertain, but it seems that he served his apprenticeship within the small English merchant community at Lisbon in the late 1630s and early 1640s. In either 1643 or 1644 he relocated to the City of London, but still maintained a close relationship with merchants in Portugal.⁵⁰ There is no record of him being a member of a livery company, and although his investments in the Irish Adventurers Scheme indicates that his sympathies lay with Parliament, his allegiance in the Civil War cannot be determined with certainty.⁵¹

During the 1640s and 1650s Edward Bushell's trading business was co-ordinated through a factor based in Lisbon, John Bushell, who was also his brother. In 1651 Edward deposed in a High Court of Admiralty suit, explaining how:

the interrogated John Bushell his this deponents brother living at Lisbone hath for several yeares last past managed and driven a considerable trade thence to the Brazila and coast of Angola, and hath frequently sugars and other merchandizes laden for his accompt upon diverse shippes trading for those parts, which hee knoweth having interest with him in several of those voyages, and hath had often and frequent advise from him concerning his said dealing there and retournes thence.⁵²

⁴⁹ C. R. Boxer, 'English Shipping in the Brazil Trade, 1640–65', *The Mariner's Mirror*, Vol. 37, No. 3 (1951), pp. 197–230.

⁵⁰ In 1651 Edward Bushell deposed in the High Court of Admiralty that 'when hee lived at Lisbone, did himselfe trade to Brazila, and since hee hath continually traded there for these seaven or eight yeares by his factors'. This suggests he left Lisbon for London in either 1643 or 1644. There is further evidence to corroborate this claim. On 22 January 1643/44 Edward Bushell appeared in the Mayor's Court of London to lodge a complaint on behalf of Richard Beare, an English merchant resident in Lisbon, who was owed a large debt from John Lyn, an English merchant based in Porto. See TNA, HCA 13/65, f. 39; LMA, MCD, Box 1.

⁵¹ On Bushell's Irish investments, see TNA, SP 63/300, f. 137; Bottigheimer, *English Money and Irish Land*, Appendix B, p. 200.

⁵² TNA, HCA 13/65, f. 39. See also TNA, SP 89/4, f. 117.

Working through his brother in Lisbon, Edward Bushell developed a profitable shipping business and drove a trade in sugar with the Portuguese empire from his base of operations in the City of London. Between August 1648 and February 1649, for instance, John Bushell hired a 240-ton Barnstable vessel the *Green Lyon* for a venture to the Azores to lade sugar and precious woods, which were subsequently sent to his brother Edward and father Thomas in London.⁵³ In 1658 the Governor of Angola, Joao Fernandes Viera, employed one of Bushell's vessels called the *Brazil Frigate* for a voyage from Luanda to Pernambuco, but was intercepted by a Dutch privateer which seized her cargo of 1200 enslaved Africans and 22,000 lb. of ivory.⁵⁴ In 1659 Symon Rodrigez Chavez and Diego de Chavez freighted Bushell's ship the *Hope*, which picked up 136 chests of Brazilian sugar at the Azores, but was captured by Turkish pirates while en-route to Venice, and taken into Algiers as a prize. It seems that Edward Bushell often conducted business with the two Chavez merchants, because in 1661 he dispatched £674 worth of tin to Lisbon on the *Marigold*, which was consigned to them.⁵⁵

Brazilian sugar was the primary focus of the Bushell trading firm. In 1651, for example, two vessels owned by Edward and John Bushell, the *Lady Conception* and *Saint Anthony*, were carrying 29 chests of Brazilian sugar when they were captured by a Dutch warship.⁵⁶ English merchants had been trading with Brazil for decades: in the 1630s 80 percent of the sugar sold in London was grown in Brazil.⁵⁷ Notable London merchants such as Nicholas Crispe, Humphrey Slaney, Samuel Vassall, Richard Shute, Roger Vivian, and Richard Cranley were all involved in this trade.⁵⁸ But there was a marked expansion in English participation in Brazilian commerce in the 1640s. According to Charles Boxer, this was due to the split between the Portuguese and Spanish crowns, and the revolt of Pernambuco against their Dutch overlords in 1645. Some English merchants resident in Lisbon, including the Bushell syndicate, were accorded

⁵³ TNA, HCA 13/61, ff. 362-63, 379-80, 383-84.

⁵⁴ Boxer, 'English Shipping in the Brazil Trade, 1640-65', p. 214. In the same year Edward Bushell signed a petition, alongside other merchants (including Thomas Kendall), recommending that Thomas Maynard should be made the English consul in Lisbon. See Bodleian Library, MS Rawl A. 61, ff. 411-19.

⁵⁵ LMA, MCD, Boxes 10 & 12. Edward Bushell had connections with Venetian merchants too. In 1651 he petitioned on the behalf of Francisco and Bartolomeu Mora, who were trading to Brazil in one of his ships when it was seized by Parliament's fleet. TNA, SP 89/4, f. 98

⁵⁶ TNA, HCA 13/65, f. 39.

⁵⁷ Stuart B. Schwartz, 'Looking for a New Brazil: Crisis and Rebirth in the Atlantic World after the Fall of Pernambuco', in Michiel Van Groesen (ed.), *The Legacy of Dutch Brazil* (Cambridge, 2014), p. 49.

⁵⁸ For Crispe and Slaney, see TNA, HCA 24/94. For Vassall and the others, see Brenner, *Merchants and Revolution*, p. 192.

privileges in the trade to Brazil by King João IV. Consequently, Portuguese subjects often hired English ships to transport their merchandise to West Africa and Brazil. Despite high customs duties levied by the Crown on foreign merchants importing and exporting goods, Englishmen such as the Bushell brothers were still keen to profit from the trade in sugar. There were 20 English vessels involved in the Brazil trade from 1648-49, including at least one of Edward Bushell's ships, the *Roebuck*, which was seized by Prince Rupert at the Tagus estuary in 1649.⁵⁹

The formation of the Companhia do Brasil (Brazil Company) in 1649 changed the dynamics of English trade to Brazil.⁶⁰ Foreign traders were now prevented from exporting wine, flour, codfish, and olive oil to the colony, as these commodities fell under the purview of the company's monopoly. Foreign merchants could, however, become shareholders of the company.⁶¹ Edward Bushell and William Bird, two English merchants who would later become involved in the sugar trade to the English Caribbean, both invested in the Brazil Company. In 1661 they acted as substitute agents for the company, prosecuting the owners of four English ships that had traded directly to Brazil for sugar and Brazilwood and had returned to London without first stopping off in Lisbon to pay the required customs duties.⁶²

Edward Bushell's business portfolio was not restricted to trade with Portugal and her empire. He invested in Irish land through the Adventurers scheme, spending £400 to secure 2000 acres in Lecale, County Down.⁶³ He also bought stock in the East India Company, and on 26 February 1661 transferred just under £1000 of stock to Rowland Hill and Thomas Tomblings.⁶⁴ Edward Bushell's business ties with Barbados can be traced to the onset of the sugar boom. In his mid-20s when the transition to sugar began, he was one of the youngest London merchants to have become involved with the Barbadian economy in the mid-seventeenth century. His kinsman, Thomas Bushell, served as his factor on the island

⁵⁹ Boxer, 'English Shipping in the Brazil Trade', p. 204. For evidence that the *Roebuck* was owned by Bushell, see LMA, MCD, Box 9.

⁶⁰ Charles R. Boxer, 'Padre António Vieira, S.J., and the Institution of the Brazil Company in 1649', *The Hispanic American Historical Review*, Vol. 29, No. 4 (1949), pp. 474-497.

⁶¹ Boxer, 'English Shipping in the Brazil Trade', p. 208.

⁶² TNA, SP 89/5, ff. 45-49, 54-55, 86.

⁶³ TNA, SP 63/300, f. 137; Bottigheimer, *English Money and Irish Land*, Appendix B, p. 200.

⁶⁴ CCMEIC, Vol. 6., p. 372.

during the 1650s. Another possible relation, Ferdinando Bushell, was also living on Barbados at this time, but it is unclear whether he was involved in the family business.⁶⁵ Although Thomas Bushell owned land and property on Barbados as early as 1647, the Bushell merchant syndicate did not speculate in the production of sugar.⁶⁶ Instead, they took advantage of the commercial dynamism on the island by setting up shop in Bridgetown, and in the process became heavily involved in the marketing of sugar and the shipping industry. In a 1663 petition to the Privy Council, Edward Bushell detailed how he had:

out of mere Charity and Compassion taken into his Service and Employment one Thomas Bushell, a poore Kinsman of his to doe him good for his better Encouragement and Advancement sent him (some yeares past) beyond the Seas and settled him in the Barbadoes, intrusting him as the Petitioner's Servant and Factor, with considerable Cargoes of goods and Summes of Moneys and thereby hath at present in his hand and possession a great part of the Petitioners Estate to the value of 7 or 8000 l. sterling.

Edward was not pleased, however, with his kinsman's management of his business affairs on Barbados. He protested to the Privy Council how Thomas Bushell had 'dealt unfaithfully and ingratfully' with him and had grown rich by converting his estate to a source of personal wealth, even becoming a freeholder of the island by using the firm's trading stock to purchase a 16-acre plantation. The King was persuaded by his petition, and subsequently sent orders to Governor Willoughby on Barbados to help Edward Bushell recover his estate.⁶⁷

Edward Bushell's commercial involvement with Barbados became more pronounced in the late 1650s and early 1660s. His deepening business ties with the island after the Restoration can be interpreted as an extension of his ongoing participation in the Brazilian sugar trade. Bushell's claim in 1663 that in 'late

⁶⁵ For Ferdinando Bushell on Barbados in the 1650s and 1660s see, BDA, RB3/3, pp. 367-368; BDA, RB3/5, pp. 166-167, 252-253; BDA, RB3/7, pp. 75-76; BDA, RB3/8, pp. 149-151; *Barbados Council Minutes*, p. 118, 163. For his Barbados will, see BDA, RB6/14, p. 127.

⁶⁶ It is possible that Thomas Bushell was living on Barbados as early as 1638, because he appears in a list of freeholders owning more than 10 acres of land on the island. William Duke, *Some Memoirs of the first Settlement of the Island of Barbados and other the Carribbee Islands with the Succession of the Governours and Commanders in Chief of Barbados to the Year 1741* (Barbados, 1741), p. 70. Although this has not been able to be verified using the deed books at the Barbados Department of Archives: the first time he appears in these records is in 1647. BDA, RB3/2, pp. 165-6.

⁶⁷ For the petition, see *APCC*, no. 584, pp. 343-44.

Yeares [he] hath had a Considerable Trade to the said Plantation both in stock and shipping', is supported by documentation from the Colonial Office Records. For example, he fitted out his ship the *Amity* (formerly known as the *Brazil Frigate*) with provisions, passengers, and servants to be transported to Barbados in April 1668.⁶⁸ Bushell signed two petitions in conjunction with other London merchants trading to Barbados: one in 1655 for Cromwell's permission to transport weaponry and ammunition to the island, and another in 1666 beseeching the King to appoint William Willoughby as the colony's governor.⁶⁹ He also assisted the English state's efforts to defend their Caribbean holdings. The *Brazil Frigate*, one of Edward Bushell's ships, was part of the fleet commanded by Sir George Ayscue sent to reduce Barbados in 1652.⁷⁰ Along with eight other merchants Edward Bushell petitioned the King for speedy payment after two of his vessels had been hired by the state in 1666 to transport Sir Tobias Bridge's regiment to Barbados to prosecute the war against England's rivals in the Caribbean during the Second Anglo-Dutch War. 135 soldiers were transported to the island on board the *Morning Star* and the *Lawrell Tree*, and reimbursement had been promised out of the duty of four-and-a-half percent levied on Barbados sugar.⁷¹

Following its conquest in 1655, Jamaica was integrated into Edward Bushell's trading network, and quickly became an important part of his business operations. Edward's keen interest in Jamaica may have developed because his kinsman and Barbados factor Thomas Bushell was a lieutenant colonel in the English force which seized the island from the Spanish in 1655. Thomas subsequently owned land on the island, presumably as a reward for his service in the Western Design.⁷² By 1660 both Edward Bushell and William Bird were despatching their vessels to trade at Jamaica. In Bushell's case, his Caribbean trading ventures were combined with his existing commerce to Portugal and her overseas colonies. The master of his ship the *Francis and Richard* was instructed in 1660 to procure a lading at Madeira, travel to Jamaica and

⁶⁸ *APCC*, no. 584, pp. 343-44; TNA, CO 1/22, f. 105.

⁶⁹ TNA, CO1/69, A3(1); TNA, CO 1/20, f. 328.

⁷⁰ TNA, SP 18/17, f. 99.

⁷¹ Huntington Library, Blathwayt Papers Box 1, BL 380, 'Petition of the Commanders and owners of ships that have parted Sir Tobias Bridges Regiment to Barbados'; BL 387, 'Peticon of Divers Merchants and commanders of Shippes which were taken up at Barbados in ye time of ye late wars'.

⁷² For Thomas Bushell's involvement in the Western Design, see *CSPC AWI*, Vol. 9., Addenda, pp. 88-91. For his land on Jamaica, see BDA, RB6/15, Will of Ann Bushell, 21 March 1662/3.

discharge her goods, before returning to either London or Lisbon. These plans were hampered, however, by an inability to obtain the full consignment of commodities promised by Bushell's factors at Jamaica. This provides indirect evidence for how the transition towards an economy based around plantation production, and especially the cultivation of sugar cane, had not yet taken hold on Jamaica by the 1660s. The *Francis and Richard* was forced instead to proceed on a turtling voyage to the Cayman islands, and Bushell lodged a complaint in the Mayor's Court of London seeking partial absolution from an insurance agreement for the Jamaica venture he had made with Samuel Free, a merchant resident in Hamburg.⁷³

Edward Bushell died in 1693 at the age of 73.⁷⁴ Throughout his life his principal trading interests were focused on a single commodity: sugar. Even Samuel Pepys, writing in 1664, was aware of 'Bushell's business of sugars'.⁷⁵ In his will Edward Bushell specified that he was owed a debt from the King of Portugal, which stands as testament to his enduring influence in Lisbon as a merchant and moneylender.⁷⁶ Though he never secured a prominent office within the English government, he was nonetheless one of London's most successful merchants. Over the course of his career his family business had become an expansive trading empire, which was mainly focused upon London and Lisbon, but from these nodes reached out to Madeira, the Azores, Cape Verde, Brazil, Angola, Venice, Barbados, and Jamaica. Particularly important for our purposes is that he was involved in both the Brazilian sugar trade and the Barbados sugar boom. The course of Edward Bushell's career, and his changing business preferences, reflects the wider process which saw the locus of sugar production in the Atlantic world shift from Brazil to the Caribbean islands over the course of the seventeenth century.

John Colleton (1608-1667)

⁷³ LMA, MCD Boxes 10 & 12.

⁷⁴ He maintained an interest in Barbados right until his death. In 1692 he petitioned on the behalf of Ralph Lane, a Barbados merchant, who had been imprisoned. TNA, SP 44/235, f. 413.

⁷⁵ Robert Latham and William Matthews, eds, *The Diary of Samuel Pepys*, Vol. 5, (London, 1971), p. 43, 10 February 1664.

⁷⁶ TNA, Prob 11/418, 'The Will of Edward Bushell of Hackney in the County of Middlesex Merchant, 1693'. William Lord Willoughby of Parham, governor of Barbados, had an outstanding debt to Edward Bushell when his will was proved in 1673. See Joanne McRee Sanders, *Barbados Wills and Administrations Vol. I: 1639-1680* (Baltimore, 1979), pp. 392-3.

The career of John Colleton highlights how English merchants who had begun their careers in the cloth trade became leading investors in the sugar boom. Indeed, Colleton went on to found one of the most important and long-lasting Barbadian planter dynasties. The region where his sugar plantation once stood in the 1650s is still called 'Colleton' today, and the 'Colleton Great House' has recently been turned into a guest home for tourists.⁷⁷

John Colleton was raised in Exeter, and for decades his family had been involved in the cloth trade as members of the town's Society of Merchant Adventurers Trading beyond the Seas. Created by royal charter in 1558, Exeter's Merchant Adventurer's Company was modelled on the London corporation of the same name, and reserved monopoly trading privileges to members engaged in the export of cloth from the port of Exeter to overseas markets.⁷⁸ By the mid-1630s John Colleton had become a freeman of Exeter by succession, had inherited substantial property in the town, and was trading in woollen manufactures from his warehouse on the banks of the River Exe to port towns in France and Northern Europe.

Like many others of his generation, the outbreak of Civil War in 1642 had a transformative impact on his life and career. Colleton opted to support the King's cause, helping to secure Exeter as a royalist stronghold for most of the war through financial donations, military service as a cavalry officer, and his leadership as governor of the town. Following a protracted siege, General Thomas Fairfax captured the city for Parliament in the spring of 1646. Colleton was punished with expulsion from the Exeter corporation and given a hefty fine of £610 for his political affiliation. The increasingly hostile environment in his hometown and the fact he was on the losing side of the Civil War played a major role in his decision to relocate to London, before eventually emigrating overseas. It is no coincidence that in March 1647, less than a year after the social dislocation and financial injury he had suffered at the hands of Parliament, Colleton purchased a 90-acre plantation on Barbados for 24,000 lb. of tobacco. This

⁷⁷ <http://www.colletonhouse.com/> (Accessed 11/09/2019).

⁷⁸ Wallace T. MacCaffrey, *Exeter, 1540-1640: The Growth of an English County Town* (Cambridge, Mass., 1975), pp. 136-137.

marked the beginning of a process through which Colleton transferred his entire family, estate, and livelihood to Barbados, in direct response to the political uncertainty in England created by the Civil War.⁷⁹

Unlike most of the other merchant investors in the sugar boom described in this dissertation, who were absentee plantation-owners that managed their landholdings through trusted agents, John Colleton emigrated to Barbados himself during the sugar boom and lived on the island for over a decade. He arrived on Barbados around the year 1650, while the colony was in the throes of a Royalist rebellion and when England was not a safe place for someone with his political sympathies, taking up residence on a sugar estate with his sons Peter and Thomas. Over the course of the next decade the Colleton family spent £30,000 on purchasing and improving Barbadian land, amassing 700 acres in total. To populate his plantations with the labourers needed to cultivate sugar cane, John Colleton began to partake in the transatlantic slave trade. The earliest record we have of Colleton's involvement in a slave trading venture dates to November 1648, when he was living in London. Colleton and his co-partners Richard Batson, Laurence Steele, and John Roberts dispatched the *Royall Merchant* from Bristol to Guinea, and then on to Barbados with a consignment of enslaved Africans. Colleton remained an active participant in the transatlantic slave trade, becoming a founding member of the Royal Adventurers Trading into Africa.⁸⁰ While he resided on Barbados during the 1650s he was appointed to powerful public offices, including the vestry of St. Joseph parish, the colonial judiciary, and the council in 1658.⁸¹

Following a decade of living on Barbados and amassing wealth through sugar production, John Colleton returned to England after the King's restoration in 1660, leaving his sons on Barbados to manage his plantations.⁸² Soon after his arrival in London Colleton was handed honours and offices from Charles II in recognition of the loyalty and military service he had given to the Royalist cause during the Civil War. He was knighted in 1660 and appointed to the newly-formed Council for Foreign Plantations, and

⁷⁹ Buchanan, 'The Colleton Family', pp. 9-15. For the 1647 land sale, see BDA, RB3/2, pp. 116-117.

⁸⁰ Buchanan, 'The Colleton Family', pp. 16-43; Newman, *A New World of Labor*, pp. 251-252. For the 1648 slave trading voyage, see TNA, HCA 13/124, ff. 34-36.

⁸¹ Gragg, *Englishmen Transplanted*, p. 66; *Barbados Council Minutes*, p. 34, 300.

⁸² Buchanan, 'The Colleton Family', pp. 9-43; Newman, *A New World of Labor*, pp. 251-252.

subsequently led deliberations over whether to institute a four-and-a-half per cent duty on Barbadian exports. Alongside fellow investors in the sugar boom such as Anthony Ashley Cooper, in 1663 Colleton became a Lord Proprietor of Carolina, and played an important role in financing the colony's settlement and facilitating the transfer Barbadian-style plantation agriculture and labour systems to the Carolina Lowcountry.⁸³ Colleton died in 1676 with propertied interests in Barbados and Carolina. His mercantile career had begun in the Exeter cloth trade, before the Civil War severed his family's generations-old connection to the export of woollen manufactures, encouraging him to instead turn his attention towards colonial commerce. Colleton's plans were shaped by both English politics and the allure of Barbadian sugar.

Martin Noell (c. 1614 – 1665)

Martin Noell's career as a businessman and public servant is perhaps the most remarkable of all the merchants who financed the sugar boom. Noell was a man made rich from the profits generated through Caribbean sugar and the shifting political circumstances in England during the Civil War and Interregnum. He was born in Stafford, where he was baptised in 1614. The early years of his career are obscure, but based on circumstantial evidence it appears he began life as a scrivener in London. This profession was important to the operation of daily business in English towns because scribes were trained to write legal documentation detailing bills of sale and extensions of credit: the cornerstone of the economy in early modern England. He continued to be an active member of the Scrivener's Company for his entire life.⁸⁴ Noell secured rapid career advancement in the 1640s, primarily due to the personal connections he forged in the City of London through his job as a scrivener and the support he gave to

⁸³ Buchanan, 'The Colleton Family', pp. 43-56.

⁸⁴ G. E. Aylmer, 'Noell, Sir Martin (bap. 1614, d. 1665), financier and merchant', *ODNB* (23 September 2004), <https://www.oxforddnb.com/view/10.1093/ref:odnb/9780198614128.001.0001/odnb-9780198614128-e-37814> (Accessed 8 November 2019). For more on scribes in early modern England, see Frank T. Melton, *Sir Robert Clayton and the origins of English deposit banking, 1658-1685* (Cambridge, 1986), ch. 1 & 2.

Parliament in the ensuing civil conflict. This political influence afforded Noell the opportunity to profit from the Civil War. In 1645, for instance, he was buying up sequestered land in Lancashire and Yorkshire and was acting as a creditor to Parliament. Alongside other ‘merchant-revolutionaries’, including Maurice Thomson and William Pennoyer, Noell was named as a commissioner of the militia in January 1648, giving him the power to collect tax arrears in London.⁸⁵

There is no record of Martin Noell being involved in trade (either domestic and overseas) before the large investments he made in land on Barbados in 1646. It seems highly likely, therefore, that Noell invested the profits he was generating from the ongoing Civil War into Barbadian land. Martin’s brother, Stephen, had settled on the island in the late 1630s, but the Noell syndicate’s involvement with Barbados began to expand markedly following the advent of sugar production in the colony and Parliamentary successes in the Civil War. In partnership with his brothers James, Stephen, and Thomas, Martin Noell purchased a total of 845.5 acres on Barbados between March 1646 and November 1647.⁸⁶ It was probably through his standing as a prominent landowner on the island and his growing reputation in the London business community that Noell became acquainted with Phillip Bell, the governor of Barbados, with whom he began to exchange letters.⁸⁷ By 1650 Martin Noell had expanded his Caribbean operations with the purchase of an estate on Montserrat, where he was trading to in conjunction with Robert Wilding (a merchant involved in the American tobacco trade during the 1630s) in their ship the *Montserrat Merchant*.⁸⁸ Because Noell first became involved with overseas commerce and colonisation through his participation in the Barbados sugar boom, it is highly likely that the profits of sugar and slavery helped to secure his career advancement in the City of London’s merchant community.

Patronage networks linking Martin Noell to leading figures in the revolutionary state propelled his career to new heights in the 1650s. Noell’s brother-in-law, for example, was the spymaster and secretary-of-state

⁸⁵ Michael J. Braddick, *The Nerves of State: Taxation and the Financing of the English State, 1558-1714* (Manchester, 1996), p. 38; *Acts and Ordinances of the Interregnum*, Vol. 1, pp. 1057-8.

⁸⁶ For these land purchases, see BDA, RB3/1, ff. 699-700; BDA, RB3/1, f. 336; BDA, RB3/1, f. 402; BDA, RB3/1, f. 552; BDA, RB3/2, ff. 152-156; BDA, RB3/2, ff. 205-206; BDA, RB3/2, ff. 201-203; BDA, RB3/2, ff. 165-169; BDA, RB3/2, ff. 203-207; BDA, RB3/2, f. 265.

⁸⁷ *Proceedings and Debates*, pp. 188-89; NRS, Hay Papers, GD34/952, ‘Capt Bell to Martin Noel’, 15 February 1650.

⁸⁸ For Noell’s Montserrat interests, see *Complete Book of Emigrants*, p. 250; *CSPC AWI*, Vol. 1., pp. 347-348.

John Thurloe. Such connections helped him to secure appointments to lucrative tax farming offices. In 1651 he was selected as the new farmer of the salt excise, a position which was made even more profitable by the control he exerted over its domestic production after purchasing the saltpans in North and South Shields.⁸⁹ Further privileges to farm the customs and excise were granted throughout the Interregnum, enabling Noell to skim revenue for himself by collecting the duties imposed on commodities such as linen, drapery, silk, glass, alum, wines, mercury, and coal exports. Between 1657 and 1659 he occupied the prestigious office of post-master general.⁹⁰ Noell's extensive political influence probably owed a lot to his role as a moneylender to the government. He secured regular contracts to provision the army and navy. In November 1654, for instance, he advanced Parliament £16,000 to enable Cromwell to outfit and supply his naval forces.⁹¹

The Parliamentary regime operated as a 'government by committee', and Martin Noell was often able to influence the formation of policy during the Interregnum because of his appointments to various committees related to trade and colonial affairs.⁹² Some of these positions may have been secured through his friendship and business relationship with the bureaucrat Thomas Povey.⁹³ Particularly significant for our purposes was Noell's participation in committees convened to strategize the Western Design. As well as helping to plan the assault against Spanish America in 1655, Noell also profited from the expedition, securing government contracts to supply the naval expedition with weapons and provisions.⁹⁴ Martin Noell continued to trade to Barbados and own a sugar works on the island,

⁸⁹ Aylmer, 'Sir Martin Noell', *ODNB*; TNA, SP 18/94, f. 158; TNA, SP 25/75, f. 677.

⁹⁰ For linen, drapery, and silk, see TNA, SP 25/78, f. 259. For coal, see TNA, SP 25/85, f. 1; Sheridan, *Sugar and Slavery*, pp. 90-92. For the office of Postmaster General, see Aylmer, 'Sir Martin Noell', *ODNB*.

⁹¹ TNA, SP 25/75, f. 595.

⁹² G. E. Aylmer, *The State's Servants: The Civil Service of the English Republic 1649-1660* (London and Boston, 1973), pp. 9-17. Noell was appointed to the Committee for Trade in July 1655, see TNA, SP 25/76, f. 176. He also served as a Commissioner for Prize Goods, see TNA, SP 25/76, f. 324.

⁹³ For an example of the close relationship between Noell and Povey, see BL, Add. Ms. 11411, f. 5, 'Martin Noell to William Povey', 22 November 1655. In this letter Noell stresses his 'friendship and intimacy with your Brother Mr Thomas Povey'.

⁹⁴ TNA, SP 18/117, f. 202; BL, Stowe MS 185, f. 83; *Thurloe Papers*, Vol. 2., p. 542, 'Mr Andrew Riccard &c. to the protector', 14 August 1654; *Thurloe Papers*, Vol. 2., pp. 571-574, 'A list of the ships provisions, presented to his highness', [n.d. c. 1654-55]; *Thurloe Papers*, Vol. 3., pp. 203-204, 'Commissioners for the southern expedition to the protector' and 'Provisions to be made for the West Indies', 7 March 1654/55. For the Jamaica petition, see TNA, CO 1/25, f. 227. The weaponry supplied by Noell through his government contracts was not always of good quality or the correct quantity. A report made following the fleet's arrival at Barbados, for instance, commented how 'we have rais'd One thousand Five Hundred Men, and not Arms for Three Hundred of them. Mr Noell's 1,500 Arms are dwindled to One Hundred and Ninety'. This suggests that in some circumstances Noell was unreliable, or at

dispatching a ship called the *Happy Fortune* there in April 1655. He became a leading figure in the servant trade, using his appointments to committees on poor relief to export 'undesirable' members of English society (especially vagrants and royalists) to meet the incessant demand for cheap labour on Barbados. As a direct consequence of these questionable business practices, Noell became embroiled in a passionate Parliamentary debate during his time serving as an MP for Stafford between 1656 and 1659, in which he was accused of selling Englishmen into slavery in the Caribbean.⁹⁵

Like many other businessmen in the City of London, Martin Noell survived the Restoration and was not punished by Charles II for his close association with the revolutionary regime. In fact, he was knighted in 1662 and even given a gift of £8000 by the King.⁹⁶ The reasons for this turn of events are unclear but were probably related to Noell's role as a prominent government creditor and his valuable expertise in trade and colonial affairs. With his intricate networks of credit which crossed political divides, spanned the Atlantic, and supported the English state, it should come as no surprise that the restored monarchy could not afford to displace such a crucial figure in the operation of both private and public finance. Over the course of the 1650s Martin Noell had ascended to the summit of London's merchant community, serving on the directorate of the East India, Levant, and Baltic companies, and through his political connections and creditworthiness had become firmly enmeshed within the English government. He became a member of the newly incorporated Royal Adventurers Trading into Africa in the early 1660s, and in 1664 negotiated with the Genoese firm Grillo & Lomellino on behalf of the company, securing for the Royal Adventurers the lucrative *asiento* contract to supply enslaved Africans to Spanish America.⁹⁷

Also significant was how Noell invested in Irish land expropriated through the Cromwellian settlement.

worst, corrupt. See C. H. Firth, ed., *The Narrative of General Venables, with an Appendix of Papers Relating to the Expedition to the West Indies and the Conquest of Jamaica, 1654-1655* (London, 1900), pp. 8-10.

⁹⁵ For Noell's Barbados trade, see TNA, SP 18/107, f. 118. For his appointment to committees on poor relief, see Donoghue, *Fire under the Ashes*, pp. 213-15. For the Parliamentary debate on Englishmen and slavery on Barbados, see *Proceedings and Debates*, pp. 247-263.

⁹⁶ Braddick, *The Nerves of State*, p. 38. For Martin Noell's knighthood, see Latham and Matthews, eds, *The Diary of Samuel Pepys*, Vol. 3, pp. 189-190, 5 September 1662, 'I this day heard that Mr. Martin Noell is knighted by the King, which I much wonder at; but yet he is certainly a very useful man'.

⁹⁷ For Noell as a director of the East India Company, see *CCMEIC*, Vol. 5, p. 176, 197, 268. For his investments in the African Company, see Donnan, *Documents Illustrative of the Slave Trade*, pp. 169-172, Document 48, 'A List of the Royal Adventurers of England Trading to Africa, 1667'. For the Levant and Baltic Companies, see Donoghue, *Fire Under the Ashes*, pp. 239-40. For the *asiento* contract and his negotiations with Grillo & Lomellino, see Svalastog, 'Mastering the worst of trades', pp. 193-194.

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He adventured £1040 and subsequently became a substantial property owner in County Wexford, controlling 2311 acres of land.⁹⁸

On 29 September 1665 Samuel Pepys noted in his diary that ‘Sir Martin Noell is this day dead of the plague in London, where he hath lain sick of it these eight days’. His wife, Dame Elizabeth Noell, also died (supposedly from grief) a little over a week later, making it highly unlikely she ever saw any financial benefits from the one-third part of the annual profits of the Homehall plantation on Barbados which had been promised to her in his will. Indeed, because Martin Noell had ‘dealt in so many things, publique and private’, it was rumoured that nobody could understand where his estate was located nor how much it was worth. Pepys mused that this was the ultimate ‘fate of these great dealers at everything’.⁹⁹ By tracing Noell’s successful business career, it is apparent that his ascendancy out of relative obscurity can be traced to two unique events which occurred in the 1640s: Parliamentary successes in the Civil War, which greatly increased his political influence, and the capital generated from Barbados sugar.

Summary

Analysing the careers of the merchants who invested in the Barbados sugar boom provides new insights into the history of the Caribbean and the merchant community of early modern England. It demonstrates how the English merchants who contributed to the transition to sugar monoculture on Barbados had diverse business portfolios. Out of the 23 most important merchant financiers of the sugar boom, 17 were involved in overseas trade to different corners of the globe during the 1630s and early 1640s (prior to their Barbadian investments). Six merchants participated in the tobacco trade to North America and

⁹⁸ Bottigheimer, *English Money and Irish Land*, Appendix B, p. 207; Donogue, *Fire Under the Ashes*, p. 209. For further information on the Cromwellian settlement, see Bottigheimer, *English Money and Irish Land*, pp. 145-163; Nicholas Canny, *Making Ireland British, 1580-1650* (Oxford, 2001), pp. 552-3, 556-7.

⁹⁹ Latham and Matthews, eds, *The Diary of Samuel Pepys*, Vol. 6, p. 245 and pp. 257-258, 28 September 1665 and 8 October 1665. For Martin Noell’s Barbados will, see BDA, RB6/10, ff. 499-507.

the Caribbean; three were investors in and directors of the trading companies which administered the commerce in luxury cloths and spices from the East Indies and Mediterranean; three drove a trade in gold, ivory, redwood, and slaves on the west coast of Africa; two were involved in the Brazilian sugar trade; and three partook in the cloth trade to Northern Europe and France. There were, however, six prominent merchant investors in the sugar boom who do not appear to have had a background in overseas commerce prior to becoming involved with Barbados. This reminds us about how important domestic business interests were to merchant careers in the seventeenth century. Some of the merchants in this category profited from the Civil War by securing lucrative government contracts to provision the army and navy, and generated capital through appointments to offices which enabled them to farm the customs and excise, for example.

The fact that the leading merchant investors in the Barbados sugar boom possessed broad domestic and overseas business interests in the 1630s and early 1640s (before the sugar boom) strongly suggests that the capital used by London merchants to finance the expansion of the plantation system and African slavery on Barbados had global origins. This challenges Brenner's argument that it was merchants with existing interests in American enterprise, and especially the tobacco trade, who 'provided much of the energy and capital' behind the advent of the Caribbean sugar industry.¹⁰⁰ It also highlights how developments in the American colonies were influenced by trading activity beyond the Atlantic basin. The broad array of trades which merchant investors in the sugar boom participated in may have been a distinctive feature of the first half of the seventeenth century, because by the close of the century most London merchants had specialised in one branch of trade due to the commercial advantages gained by possessing expert knowledge and creditworthy contacts in a specific trade. An eighteenth-century commission agent involved in Caribbean trade was highly unlikely to have invested in EIC joint stock, let

¹⁰⁰ Brenner, *Merchants and Revolution*, p. 161.

alone to have served as a director of the EIC, like several of the merchant financiers of the Barbados sugar boom in the mid-seventeenth century.¹⁰¹

Can this analysis also tell us something about the significance of participation in the Barbados sugar boom to the career trajectories of merchants in early modern England? The most striking pattern relates to the timing of these investments within their wider careers. It is remarkable how many of the merchant financiers of the 1640s sugar boom rose from their marginal position outside of the established City elite to become the leaders of London's business community during the 1650s and early 1660s, sitting on the directorates of various overseas companies and wielding extraordinary influence in the English government.

After the sugar boom merchants with Caribbean business ties were increasingly elected as alderman, wielding power over the civic governance of the corporation of London: Thomas Noell in 1649, Andrew Riccard in 1651, William Williams in 1652, William Pennoyer in 1657, Martin Noell in 1657, William Vincent in 1658, Richard Ford in 1661, and Michael Davison in 1666.¹⁰² Thirteen prominent investors in Barbados occupied seats on the court of directors of the East India Company in the period between 1650 and 1670: Maurice Thomson, William Pennoyer, Andrew Riccard, Edwin Browne, Thomas Andrews, Michael Davison, Jeremy Blackman, Martin Noell, Roger Vivian, John Wood, William Williams, James Drax, and Thomas Kendall. Maurice Thomson and Andrew Riccard even became the governor of the East India Company for a time.¹⁰³ A smaller number of merchant financiers of the sugar boom also served in the directorate of the Levant Company: Edwin Browne William Williams, Andrew Riccard, Roger Vivian, and Thomas Kendall. Andrew Riccard served as the governor of Levant Company for eighteen years.¹⁰⁴ Merchant financiers of the Barbados sugar boom subscribed heavily to the new slave

¹⁰¹ On the diverse business portfolios maintained by London merchants in the early seventeenth century, see Smith, 'Global Dimensions of London's Commercial Community'. On the greater specialisation seen at the end of the seventeenth century, see Nash, 'The Organization of Trade and Finance', pp. 112-115.

¹⁰² Alfred P. Beaven, 'Chronological list of aldermen: 1601-1650' & 'Chronological list of aldermen: 1651-1700', in *The Aldermen of the City of London Temp. Henry III - 1912* (London, 1908), pp. 47-119. British History Online <https://www.british-history.ac.uk/no-series/london-aldermen/hen3-1912> (Accessed 29 May 2019).

¹⁰³ *CCMEIC*, Vols. 4 – 6.

¹⁰⁴ Brock, 'The Company Director', Appendix I, 'List of directors, 1600-1708'.

trading company, the Royal Adventurers Trading into Africa, first incorporated by royal patent in 1660: Martin Noell, James Noell, Thomas Noell, Thomas Povey, Andrew Riccard, and John Colleton.¹⁰⁵ As we will explore in greater detail in Chapter Four, merchant investors in Barbados sugar production also became central figures within successive English governments, and were heavily represented on committees and councils related to trade and colonial business between 1653 and 1665. Their growing wealth, improved reputations, and political influence enabled them to secure appointments to offices to farm the customs and excise and function as moneylenders to the government, becoming so indispensable to government finance that they remained highly influential after the Restoration.

The proceeds of sugar and slavery played a larger part in advancing the careers of some London merchants than has hitherto been appreciated. Indeed, it appears that a specific generation of merchants, born predominantly in the 1600s and 1610s (when the American plantations were first being settled), were particularly heavy investors in the 1640s Barbados sugar boom. For many of these men, their participation in the sugar boom came early in their careers, suggesting that these investments were instrumental in their subsequent rise to prominence. But we must be careful not to overemphasise the significance of Barbados in causing this pattern. Allegiance to Parliament in the Civil War, or at the very least political equivocation, was also important in securing the rise of these merchants in the City of London during the 1640s and 1650s.

The career of the merchant Nicholas Crispe serves as a good example of how important this factor could be. Crispe was a London-based trader with a varied business portfolio during the 1620s and 1630s.¹⁰⁶ His principal interest was West African commerce, where he operated as both a private trader and member of

¹⁰⁵ The initial membership of the Royal Adventurers Trading into Africa in 1660 was almost wholly made up of the King and his courtiers. Only after 1663 did merchants begin to invest capital in the company. Others with Caribbean business interests who subscribed included: Sir Nicholas Crispe, Thomas Crispe, Capt. Edward Crispe, Sir Richard Ford, Sir Thomas Modyford, and Sir James Modyford. See Donnan, *Documents Illustrative of the Slave Trade*, pp. 169-172 (and associated footnotes), Document 48, 'A List of the Royal Adventurers of England Trading into Africa', 1667.

¹⁰⁶ On top of his deep commercial ties with West Africa, Nicholas Crispe was a Merchant Adventurer, stockholder and director of the East India Company, a Mediterranean trader, and a subscriber to the 1642 Irish Adventurers scheme. Robert Ashton, 'Crisp, Sir Nicholas, first baronet (c. 1599–1666), merchant and royalist', *ODNB* (23 September 2004), <https://www.oxforddnb.com/view/10.1093/ref:odnb/9780198614128.001.0001/odnb-9780198614128-e-6705> (Accessed 8 November 2019).

the Guinea Company, spearheading English efforts to establish a commercial presence on the Gold Coast. By 1640 Crispe was in a prime position to profit from the upcoming Barbados sugar boom. In partnership with John Wood and his brother Samuel, he had begun trading in enslaved Africans to the island in the early 1640s and had even purchased a plantation on the island. But the Civil War intervened. Following the outbreak of hostilities between King and Parliament in 1642, Crispe chose to give public backing to the King. This was probably due to the favour he had received from Charles I in recent years: he was appointed as a collector of customs in the western ports in 1638, as a farmer of duties on various commodities, and was knighted in 1640. During the Civil War Crispe bolstered the royalist cause by lending money to the Crown, providing intelligence, relocating to the King's court at Oxford, and equipping a squadron of 15 vessels out of personal funds.¹⁰⁷

Parliament could not countenance such overt public support for Charles I. Crispe's fortune and company stock was sequestered in 1644, which made it next to impossible to continue trading to West Africa and to invest in Barbadian sugar production alongside other Guinea Company members such as John Wood, who had kept their heads down following the declaration of war. Crispe absconded to France in 1646 and remained there for the duration of the Interregnum, only returning to London once the English monarchy had been restored in 1660.¹⁰⁸ As we have seen, some other royalist merchants such as John Colleton opted to flee to the American colonies. He became a merchant-planter on Barbados for the duration of the 1650s, and only felt safe returning to England following the Restoration. Outright hostility to the Parliamentary regime usually ended with the sequestration of private property, a massive loss of political influence, and ultimately ostracisation from the merchant community in the City of London for nearly two decades. Allegiance in the Civil War therefore had a decisive influence over which merchants became leading figures in London's community of overseas traders at mid-century.

¹⁰⁷ Ashton, 'Sir Nicholas Crisp', *ODNB*.

¹⁰⁸ R. Porter, 'The Crispe Family and the African Trade in the Seventeenth Century', *The Journal of African History*, Vol. 9, No. 1 (1968), pp. 57-77; Ashton, 'Sir Nicholas Crisp', *ODNB*. For Crispe's Barbadian interests in the early 1640s, see BDA, RB3/1, pp. 202-3.

2. Why did London merchants invest in the Barbados sugar industry during the 1640s?

In this section it will be argued that timing was crucial to the rapid emergence of a sugar industry on Barbados. The decision taken by London merchants to invest heavily in Barbados sugar production was directly influenced by two external events. First, the new commercial opportunities opening up in the 1640s due to the collapse of the Brazilian sugar industry, which caused the price of sugar in European markets to soar. Second, the increased economic and political uncertainty in England generated by the Civil War. Rather than securing their liquid capital in English land and the joint stock of overseas trading companies, which was perilous during the 1640s due to the ongoing conflict, the evidence suggests that London merchants sought to mitigate against increased risk by diversifying their investment portfolios. Merchants invested in the war by securing government contracts and tax farming offices, stored their money with goldsmith-bankers, and increasingly looked beyond England's shores for secure locations to store their assets. They secured their money in Irish land through the Adventurers Scheme, and also on Barbados, where they speculated in the sugar industry by purchasing plantations and enslaved Africans. The precipitous decline in Brazilian sugar production and the English Civil War proved to be unique events, which caused English merchants to invest heavily in the Barbados sugar industry during the 1640s, accelerating Barbadian economic development.

Why did sugar become a significant export crop on Barbados at a specific point in time, namely the mid-1640s? The sugar cane crop had been present on Barbados since 1627, when Henry Powell had fetched an array of seeds and plants from the Essequibo plantation for the use of the initial settlers.¹⁰⁹ Why, then, did planters struggle with tobacco and cotton for nearly two decades before turning towards commercial sugar production? This question has puzzled historians for decades. The answer, I would argue, is that it was not until the 1640s that the knowledge of how to efficiently cultivate and process the plant reached Barbadian planters through connections with Brazil. It was also during the 1640s that the Barbadian

¹⁰⁹ Harlow, *Colonising Expeditions*, pp. 37-38.

economy first received massive capital investment and an influx of unfree labour supplied by English merchants. Practical knowledge, unfree labour, and capital investment were needed to initiate commercial sugar production in the seventeenth century, and a fortuitous convergence of external political and economic circumstances in the 1640s meant that Barbados received this all at once. This helps to explain why a fully-fledged plantation economy developed so rapidly on Barbados, whereas elsewhere in the English Caribbean it took several decades for a commercial sugar industry to emerge.

A protracted period of violence in Brazil between the Portuguese and the Dutch began in 1630 with the conquest of Recife and the establishment of a Dutch colony known as New Holland. Warfare in northern Brazil, which flared in 1645, had a twofold impact on the development of the Barbados sugar industry. It facilitated transfers in useful knowledge related to the cultivation and refining of sugar came from Brazil to Barbadian planters, and the spike in sugar prices caused by the conflict meant that getting involved in sugar production represented a new and profitable commercial opportunity for English merchants.

Barbados is the closest island in the Lesser Antilles to the alluvial sugar-producing regions of northern Brazil. The proximity of Barbados to the South American continent enabled entrepreneurial English planters to visit Brazil for instruction in the cultivation of sugar, and also meant that the island was a prime location for refugees fleeing the escalating violence between the Dutch and Portuguese in the 1640s. This suggests that connections between Barbados and northern Brazil facilitated the dissemination of useful knowledge to Barbadian planters. Several of the narratives written in the seventeenth century which describe the origins of cane cultivation on Barbados attribute the establishment of the sugar industry on the island to the distribution of plants and expertise from Brazil. Richard Ligon, a royalist exile who recorded his experiences on the island between 1647 and 1650 in his *True and Exact History of Barbados* (1657), claimed that when he first arrived at the colony in September 1647, 'the great work of Sugar making, was but newly practised by the inhabitants there'. According to Ligon, 'some of the most

industrious men, having gotten Plants from Pernambuco', decided to make a 'trial of them at the Barbados'.¹¹⁰

Through a process of trial and error, along with 'new directions from Brazil', planters on Barbados were able to quickly improve the quality and quantity of their yields. Ligon explained that sometimes this process of knowledge exchange and technology transfer between Brazil and Barbados was facilitated by Englishmen who travelled to Brazil seeking 'the secrets of that mystery', who returned with 'Plants and better Knowledge', while at other occasions by 'strangers' from the mainland who settled on the island. It is likely these 'strangers' were Sephardic refugees who had fled to the Caribbean islands following the escalating conflict between the Dutch and Portuguese in northern Brazil, and had experience in the sugar trade.¹¹¹ It has even been plausibly argued that the 'Portugall negroes' described as labouring on James Drax's plantation may have been Afro-Brazilians, who were purchased specifically because of their pre-existing knowledge in how to raise a bountiful sugar crop and process the cane.¹¹² By the time Ligon left Barbados in 1650, planters on the island had learnt how to plant sugar efficiently, had realised that the ideal time to harvest the ripe cane was after 15 months, and had become proficient in the industrial processes associated with boiling and curing away the molasses to produce white sugar.¹¹³

The economic impact of warfare in northern Brazil during the 1640s is a key part of the explanation for why London merchants became deeply involved with the Barbados sugar economy in the same decade. English planters and merchants were able to capitalise upon the elevation in sugar prices that this disorder generated by developing a new source of supply on Barbados which they themselves controlled. The Dutch conquest of Pernambuco and the establishment of the captaincies on the northeastern coast of Brazil between 1630 and 1654 severely disrupted the Atlantic sugar economy. This disturbance was generated by the combined impact of the interruption to sugar production and the harm which Dutch privateers caused to Portuguese maritime commerce with Brazil. Both the invaders and the resisters

¹¹⁰ Richard Ligon, *A True and Exact History of the Island of Barbados*, ed. Karen Ordahl Kupperman (Indianapolis, 2011), pp. 147-148.

¹¹¹ Schwartz, 'Looking for a New Brazil', p. 48.

¹¹² Menard, *Sweet Negotiations*, 16-17; Otremba, 'Inventing Ingenios', pp. 134-135.

¹¹³ Ligon, *True and Exact History*, pp. 147-148.

destroyed *engenbos* (sugar mills) and burned cane fields, rendering around one third of the mills in the region out of operation by 1639.¹¹⁴ To compound these issues further, a high proportion of the Portuguese vessels engaged in the Brazil trade were captured by Dutch privateers, with approximately 220 merchant caravels being taken in the two years from 1647 to 1648.¹¹⁵ It has been estimated that the tumult in Bahia and Pernambuco caused annual sugar exports from Brazil to contract from a high of around 14,900 crates of sugar in 1641 to approximately 1,500 crates every year in the period between 1647 and 1652.¹¹⁶ The precipitous decline in sugar exports from Brazil to Europe presented an excellent commercial opportunity for those willing to enter the market and develop a new source of sugar production in the Caribbean or elsewhere.¹¹⁷ Samuel Hartlib, the Anglo-German intellectual living in England, was aware that because of ‘the mills being destroyed in Brasil, the Sugar-trade in Barbados prospers the more’.¹¹⁸

Entrepreneurial planters on Barbados capitalised upon this opportunity as early as October 1643. That month Thomas Robinson had written to the Earl of Carlisle to report, though certainly with some exaggeration about the rate of sugar production, how:

the Island of the Barbadas is growne the most flourishing Island in all those American pts and I verily believe in all the world for the p[ro]ducing of Sugars Indico Ginger...this shippe is laden with 70tie cheists of sugar all of one mans p[ro]duce and their Sugar works are brought to that maturity that each worke for the space of eight monethes in the yeare can and doeth yield 500 li of sugar each 24 howeres.¹¹⁹

¹¹⁴ Stuart B. Schwartz, ‘A Commonwealth within Itself: The Early Brazilian Sugar Industry, 1550-1670’, in Stuart B. Schwartz ed., *Tropical Babels: Sugar and the Making of the Atlantic World, 1450-1680* (Chapel Hill, 2004), pp. 166-167.

¹¹⁵ C. R. Boxer, *The Dutch in Brazil, 1624-1654* (Oxford, 1957), p. 202 & pp. 280-290.

¹¹⁶ Schwartz, ‘A Commonwealth within Itself: The Early Brazilian Sugar Industry’, data gathered from the graph on p. 169.

¹¹⁷ Stuart B. Schwartz, *Sugar Plantations and the Formation of Brazilian Society: Bahia, 1550-1835* (Cambridge, 1986), p. 183.

¹¹⁸ Hartlib Papers, Ephemeres 1649 Part 3, 28/1/26B-38B.

¹¹⁹ NRS, Hay Papers, GD34/939/6, ‘Thomas Robinson at St. Christopher to Thomas Chappell secretary to James Earl of Carlisle’, 24 October 1643.

Once reports began to filter back to England that experiments with cultivating and refining sugar cane on Barbados were proving fruitful, merchants in the City of London began to speculate in the industry themselves. Affluent merchants were in a prime position to take advantage of this new business opportunity, as they could quickly raise or borrow the capital needed to purchase a plantation and initiate sugar production. As we saw in the previous section, some even had existing business ties with Barbados, which gave them an added advantage. The annual income which could be generated through the sale of sugar was lauded by many on the island. In 1646, one of the pioneers of sugar cultivation on Barbados, William Powrey, wrote favourably about the financial returns that investing in a sugar plantation could bring. To encourage his uncle Archibald Hay to transfer ownership of the Hope Plantation into his own hands, Powrey highlighted how this parcel of land had the potential to ‘make one of the best sugar plantations in this Island’. With the expense of £1000 necessary to begin operations, he hoped to be able to raise for his uncle a thriving industry on Barbados, which after just three years promised returns of up to £2000 per annum.¹²⁰ From his experience working on the island as an overseer on Thomas Modyford’s estate between 1647 and 1650, Richard Ligon claimed that, when operational, a 500-acre sugar plantation would generate an annual profit of £7516.¹²¹

The accounts of sugar planters on Barbados have not survived for the mid-seventeenth century, which makes it impossible to assess the veracity of these claims. But if annual profits for the pioneers of sugar cultivation on Barbados were indeed in the region of 40 to 50 percent like these figures suggest, then this would have represented an extremely lucrative business investment for merchants. The average return on a business portfolio comprised of both safe and risky investments was in the order of 10 to 15 percent in the first half of the seventeenth century. The East India Company’s first joint stock yielded shareholders 7.25 percent per annum, while the trade to the Levant, Spain, and Portugal generally provided merchants with returns of between 10 and 12 percent. Profits generated from the manufacturing and domestic retail trades were similar in magnitude.¹²² Barbados sugar, by comparison, offered investors an extraordinary

¹²⁰ NRS, Hay Papers, GD34/923/39, William Powrey to Archibald Hay, 20 November 1646.

¹²¹ Ligon, *True and Exact History*, pp. 189-192.

¹²² Grassby, *Business Community*, pp. 236-240.

profit margin in the 1640s. This was a direct consequence of the massive spike in sugar prices within the Atlantic market caused by the warfare in northern Brazil during the 1640s.¹²³

On top of the new commercial opportunities arising from the disruption to the Atlantic economy caused by the collapse of the Brazilian sugar industry, the political crisis unfolding in England, which spilled over into civil war in 1642, also played a decisive role in shaping the investment decisions of merchants.

Accommodation with the King always seemed the most likely outcome, but England's political and economic horizons became ever more uncertain as the war continued to drag on over multiple years. The London economy was hit particularly hard in the period from summer 1643 to spring 1644 because of a royalist blockade of internal trade and the exacting demands of Parliamentary taxation.¹²⁴ Besides the large pitched battles fought by field armies at Edgehill, Newbury, and Marston Moor there were also smaller engagements, skirmishes, and sieges fought across England in these years. 62,000 war deaths (along with a further 100,000 casualties from disease), the widespread destruction of private property, and the sequestration of land were just some of the consequences of the First Civil War between 1642 and 1646.¹²⁵ Warfare in England indirectly stimulated the development of the plantation system on Barbados by injecting a large supply of unfree labour into the island's economy: exiled prisoners of war and political captives sent over from the British Isles performed a lot of the agricultural and industrial work associated with sugar production in the 1640s.¹²⁶

The Civil War (1642-46) and the subsequent revolution (1647-49) influenced the investment decisions made by English merchants. It transformed what merchants could do with their available capital. In the seventeenth century it was common for merchants to make their money in commerce, before steadily 'de-risking' over the course of their business careers by placing their capital in more stable investments, such

¹²³ By the late seventeenth century profit margins on Barbadian sugar had fallen to between 5 and 6 percent, and Jamaican sugar was fetching 10 percent. Grassby, *Business Community*, pp. 238-239; Menard, *Sweet Negotiations*, pp. 86-87.

¹²⁴ Ben Coates, *The Impact of the English Civil War on the Economy of London, 1642-50* (Aldershot, 2004), pp. 109-117, 231.

¹²⁵ Michael J. Braddick, *God's Fury, England's Fire: A New History of the English Civil Wars* (London, 2008), pp. 389-397.

¹²⁶ Newman, *A New World of Labor*, 73-74, 79-80.

as landed property, real estate, moneylending to the Crown, and government contracts to farm taxes.¹²⁷

But the tumult caused by civil war meant that, in the 1640s, some of these traditional outlets for capital investment became unreliable. Owning landed property in England, for instance, suddenly became a much less secure prospect for investment. Land was rendered unusable due to widespread sequestrations, and depending on the outcome of the war, which was not certain until late 1648, landowners faced the possibility of not even having legal recourse to reclaim their property following the cessation of hostilities. In a process which began in the summer of 1642 but probably reached its peak in late 1643, London merchants and scriveners withdrew their investments from the provincial economy because they believed debts would not be repaid and their property was under threat of destruction and sequestration. While some English merchants and army grandees with political ties to the parliamentary regime took advantage of the opportunity presented by sequestration, and bought-up royalist lands in England seized by the state at cheap rates, this process only began in earnest after the end of the First Civil War in 1646. Investing in English land during the war was not a secure prospect, and few merchants were willing to shoulder this risk.¹²⁸ Though closer to hand, owning real estate in London was not necessarily a more reliable option, as landlords were forced to lower rents after struggling to receive payments from impoverished tenants.¹²⁹

Disruption to the usual business practices of merchants during the 1640s was not just restricted to landed investments. Domestic and overseas trade was almost immediately put in an unsettled state with the onset of hostilities. This was anticipated by the sugar boom investor Thomas Povey in a lengthy diatribe published at the beginning of the conflict in 1642. Povey highlighted the negative consequences the war would have on commerce, stressing how ‘certaine the utter decay of trade (the livelihood of the State) will be’, and that ‘the treasure of this Land, heaped up by a long lived peace, will be suddenly powred out, and be seene no more’.¹³⁰ The Civil War did not cause London’s domestic and overseas trade to cease

¹²⁷ Grassby, *Business Community*, pp. 172-175, 243-44, 257, 262-268, 407-409.

¹²⁸ Coates, *The Impact of the Civil War on the Economy of London*, p. 222. On sequestration, see H. J. Habakkuk, ‘Public Finance and the Sale of Confiscated Property during the Interregnum’, *The Economic History Review*, Vol. 15, No. 1 (1962), pp. 70-88; H. J. Habakkuk, ‘Landowners and the Civil War’, *The Economic History Review*, Vol. 18, No. 1 (1965), pp. 130-151.

¹²⁹ Coates, *The Impact of the Civil War on the Economy of London*, p. 224.

¹³⁰ Thomas Povey, *The Moderator Expecting Sudden Peace, or Certain Ruine. Directed by Reason, Arising out of the Consideration of what hath already happened, Our present Condition, and the most likely Consequences of These* (London, 1642), p. 10.

altogether, but it did harm the city's economy and made dispatching vessels a much riskier prospect for merchants. This generated anxiety among merchants about the viability of overseas trade, and also made it more expensive to conduct commerce safely, as the cost of insuring vessels and cargo increased. James Howell offered a bleak assessment of this situation in December 1647. He observed how 'the Mint is starv'd for want of Bullion; *Trade* which was ever the sinew of this Island doth visibly decay, and the *Insurance* of Ships is risen from two to ten in the hundred'.¹³¹

From 1643-44 the King sought to stifle London's commerce by encouraging foreign princes and governors of the American colonies to declare the city's merchants as enemies. Such legislative action had limited success: only the King of Denmark prohibited trade with London merchants and their colonial trade continued unabated.¹³² It was the activity of royalist and Irish privateers in organising blockades and harassing merchant vessels which caused the most disruption to London's overseas trade. Privateering was a logical strategy for royalists, because the customs revenue generated from the import and export of commodities through the port of London played a role in bankrolling Parliament's ultimate victory.¹³³ Total merchant losses to privateers are hard to estimate, because the prize lists produced by royalist and Irish authorities have not survived. But qualitative sources suggest that at least 370 vessels were taken by privateers operating out of bases in Ireland and the Channel Islands. The scale of privateering during the Civil War was vast, and historians agree that these figures underestimate the total number of vessels belonging to London merchants taken as prizes, as they do not include data from other provincial ports under royalist control such as Bristol and Dartmouth.¹³⁴ The records of the High Court of Admiralty and

Bulstrode Whitelocke voiced similar concerns that same year, noting how the people of England had been brought 'very low' due to 'the present general decay of trade'. Quoted in Bottigheimer, *English Money and Irish Land*, p. 48.

¹³¹ Quoted in Coates, *The Impact of the Civil War on the Economy of London*, p. 228.

¹³² Coates, *The Impact of the Civil War on the Economy of London*, pp. 117-125.

¹³³ For the importance of controlling the port of London to Parliament's victory in the Civil War, see Robert M. Bliss, *Revolution and Empire: English Politics and the American Colonies in the Seventeenth Century* (Manchester, 1990), pp. 48-49.

¹³⁴ Coates, *The Impact of the Civil War on the Economy of London*, pp. 125-127; Richard J. Blakemore and Elaine Murphy, *The British Civil Wars at Sea, 1638-1653* (Woodbridge, 2018), pp. 78-79.

the Mayor's Court of London for the 1640s are full of examples of trading voyages gone awry due to the actions of royalist privateers.¹³⁵

The commercial impact of royalist privateers escalated over the course of the war, with complaints from merchants reaching their height in the last two years of the 1640s. The mutiny of Parliament's navy further complicated matters, as during the summer of 1648 the rebel fleet was used to blockade the Thames estuary and seize merchant vessels, bringing London's maritime trade to a virtual standstill.¹³⁶ By the middle of the decade the deleterious economic impact of the Civil War was increasingly being felt across the Atlantic. Growing insecurity in commerce and the resultant decline in merchant shipping restricted the flow of goods and information coming into the American colonies. The anxieties this generated were articulated in a 1646 letter from William Powrey on Barbados to Archibald Hay in England. 'I pray God send peace', he remonstrated, so 'that there may bee a settled way of tradeinge againe sett on foot and that you may be able to assist and direct mee such a course that I may make the best of my commodities that the same may be sould to the best advantage'.¹³⁷

The Civil War caused extensive disruption to England's overseas commerce. Total cloth exports to the Baltic through Plymouth Sound plummeted from 42,000 pieces in 1642 to just 5000 in 1644. Impositions collected in London on exports to the eastern Mediterranean, under the remit of the Levant Company, deteriorated from £1,843 in 1643 to £528 in 1644, a fall of 72 percent in the space of a year. In 1645 the Levant Company expressed the 'distressed condition' of their trade in a letter to Sir Sackville Crowe, the ambassador in Constantinople.¹³⁸ Imports also saw precipitous decline, principally because of the shrinking market for luxury commodities caused by the war and the increased difficulty with which merchants and wholesalers in port towns were able to reach their provincial customers. The Levant Company's impositions on imports of currants and other consumer goods stood at £2,491 in 1635, but

¹³⁵ E.g. In July 1647 the *Cormantine Frigate*, a Guinea Company vessel owned by the London merchants Rowland Wilson, Maurice Thompson, and Thomas Walter was seized by a royalist warship in the service of the Prince of Wales and taken to Holland before being sold as a prize. LMA, MCD Box 2, CLA/024/06/002.

¹³⁶ Coates, *The Impact of the Civil War on the Economy of London*, pp. 127-137.

¹³⁷ NRS, Hay Papers, GD34/945/1, William Powrey to Archibald Hay, 15 November 1646.

¹³⁸ Alfred C. Wood, *A History of the Levant Company* (Oxford, 1935), pp. 52-53; Coates, *The Impact of the Civil War on the Economy of London*, pp. 169-170.

had decreased by 70 percent to only £760 in 1644. In response to the near collapse of the re-export trade to European markets, imports of tobacco from the Chesapeake and Bermuda fell by nearly one half, from 1,463,000 lb. in 1640 to 788,000 lb. in 1647.¹³⁹ The negative impact of the fractious political climate on overseas commerce made investors reluctant to subscribe to the joint stock of overseas trading companies. Only £105,000 was invested in East India Company's fourth joint stock in 1643, for instance, which forced the company to borrow £120,000 to finance their trade.¹⁴⁰

It would be wrong to suggest, however, that there was a consistent decline in *all* of England's overseas import and export trades during the Civil War. While imports of French wines fell markedly, imports of Spanish wines from the Canary Islands actually expanded, offsetting some of the negative impacts the English consumer felt from the disturbance in the French wine trade. There was also a slight recovery in London's overseas trade after 1644 as the war began to turn in Parliament's favour: though this limited revival was halted in 1647-48 due to anxieties about the radical political events occurring in the city and the mutiny of the navy.¹⁴¹ But from what historians have been able to surmise from the available quantitative evidence, the overall trend in England's overseas trade between 1642 and 1649 was sharply downwards. This echoes what contemporary commentators observed. A pamphlet published in London in June 1648 remarked on: 'The sensible decay of forraigne Traffick, which even before the late great alteration in the Navy, was shrunk to a third part lesse then formerly it was wont to be, as may be demonstrated by the Customes; and (as it is justly feared) will now fall to nothing'.¹⁴²

With English land an increasingly unreliable investment option and overseas trade in an unsettled state, London merchants looked for alternative means of making money and securing their liquid capital in the 1640s. One potentially lucrative opportunity for domestic investment was to act as a military supplier for

¹³⁹ Coates, *The Impact of the Civil War on the Economy of London*, pp. 171-175; J. S. Kepler, 'Estimates of Direct Shipments of Tobacco and Sugar from the Chief English Plantations to European Markets, 1620-1669', *Journal of European Economic History*, Vol. 28 (1999), p. 119.

¹⁴⁰ *CCMEIC*, Vol. 2., p. XXVI.

¹⁴¹ On the wine trade and the temporary recovery in trade after 1644, see Coates, *The Impact of the Civil War on the Economy of London*, pp. 172-175.

¹⁴² Anon., *The Necessity of the Speedy Calling a Common-Hall, In respect of the present grievances of this City. With the Resolution of many Thousand, honest, peaceable, and wel-affected Citizens thereupon* (London, 1648), p. 3.

the parliamentary war machine. Following the outbreak of war in 1642, the government quickly became an important customer for English merchants and craftsmen. Those who possessed political connections with the new regime were handed government contracts to arm and equip Parliament's armies with goods in steady demand due to the exacting requirements of war, including muskets, pikes, saltpetre, gunpowder, heavy ordnance, clothing, shoes, horses, saddles, and food.¹⁴³ Stephen Estwicke, the London-based merchant and haberdasher, was commissioned to provision clothing, and in the first eight months of the war issued over £23,000 worth of clothes to the Earl of Essex's army. While Jenkin Ellis and John Mings, members of the Cordwainer's company, were major suppliers of shoes to Parliament.¹⁴⁴

As one might expect, the parliamentary government's efforts to provision weapons and ammunition consumed the largest sums, which provided a significant stimulus to the London armaments and munitions industries. In September 1642 Parliament contracted with the merchants Thomas Andrewes and Stephen Estwicke to import £15,000 worth of weaponry from Holland and France. The American tobacco traders and religious radicals, Owen Rowe and John Bradley, were charged with oversight of the provision of munitions and ordnance. But by the time of the formation of the New Model Army in 1645, domestic arms manufacturers such as the London Gunsmith's Company had grown to a sufficient size to supply Parliament's forces with most of what they needed to prosecute the war effort.¹⁴⁵ During the Interregnum both William Pennoyer and Maurice Thomson contracted with the East India Company on behalf of the state for a supply of saltpetre, a key ingredient in the manufacture of gunpowder, which was extracted from mineral deposits in Bihar near the banks of the River Ganges and used in the London munitions industries.¹⁴⁶ Those merchants and artificers involved in the carrying trade, by both sea and land, also did well in the 1640s due to the government's need to resort to private contractors to transport

¹⁴³ Ian Gentles, *The New Model Army in England, Ireland and Scotland, 1645-1663* (Oxford, 1992), pp. 40-47; Coates, *The Impact of the Civil War on the Economy of London*, ch. 4; Braddick, *God's Fury, England's Fire*, pp. 397-399. On the supply of horses, see Gavin Robinson, 'Horse Supply and the Development of the New Model Army, 1642-1646', *War in History*, Vol. 15, No. 2 (2008), pp. 121-40

¹⁴⁴ Coates, *The Impact of the Civil War on the Economy of London*, p. 93, 102-103. See also Gentles, *The New Model Army*, pp. 41-42.

¹⁴⁵ Peter Edwards, *Dealing in Death: The Arms Trade and the British Civil Wars, 1638-52* (Stroud, 2000); Coates, *The Impact of the Civil War on the Economy of London*, pp. 93-96; Brenner, *Merchants and Revolution*, pp. 155-156, 338.

¹⁴⁶ CCMEIC, Vol. 3, p. 349, 351-352, 355; Vol. 5, pp. 62-63, 155.

these provisions to its armies across England. Wartime demand for carts and wagons enabled the master wheelwright, Thomas Bateman, to generate an annual income of £370, far above his usual paygrade.¹⁴⁷

Another opportunity for domestic investment, which helped to create some of the largest merchant fortunes during the Civil War years, was participation in public finance.¹⁴⁸ Robert Brenner has demonstrated how the London merchants who assisted in the capture of the English state in 1641-42 were heavily represented in the new financial bureaucracy constructed to bankroll the Parliamentary war effort through direct taxation. An ordinance enacted in November 1642 introduced a weekly assessment on the City of London, which was administered by a commission consisting of, among others, Maurice Thomson, Samuel Vassall, John Fowke, Isaac Pennington, and John Venn. Thomson and his associates also dominated another newly appointed commission associated with state finance, the committee for the sequestration of delinquents' estates, which was formed in March 1643 to levy a fine on royalists who wished to recover their sequestered property.¹⁴⁹ The committee of accounts, first appointed in February 1644 to audit the accounts of those who had received Parliamentary funds, was also largely composed of London merchants.¹⁵⁰

Indirect taxes, such as the customs and excise, accounted for the majority of the revenue that Parliament raised in London during the Civil War. Wealthy merchants were often employed as tax collectors in seventeenth-century England because they had the expertise to ensure efficient collection and could perform useful financial services for the government, including advancing the regime large sums from their personal pool of credit. Government financing expanded significantly in the 1640s due to the demands of the parliamentary war effort, and it was mostly underwritten by private merchants who contracted for revenue collection, and not by public means (e.g. direct taxation). In return for a set income to be paid at a pre-determined date, the parliamentary government sold private individuals the

¹⁴⁷ Braddick, *God's Fury, England's Fire*, p. 399.

¹⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 403-404; Braddick, *The Nerves of State*, pp. 34-41.

¹⁴⁹ Brenner, *Merchants and Revolution*, p. 389, 428-435; Braddick, *The Nerves of State*, ch. 3; Wheeler, *The Making of a World Power*, ch. 8.

¹⁵⁰ Jason Peacey, 'Politics, Accounts and Propaganda in the Long Parliament', in Chris R. Kyle and Jason Peacey, eds, *Parliament at Work: Parliamentary Committees, Political Power and Public Access in Early Modern England* (Woodbridge, 2002), pp. 59-78 (esp. p. 62).

right to collect the customs and excise on their behalf, enabling merchants to skim revenue and profiteer from this powerful position. Merchants required reserves of liquid capital to get started in tax farming, but this was a low-risk high-reward activity, which usually multiplied the initial money invested rapidly.¹⁵¹

It was merchants with political ties to the parliamentary government, like Maurice Thomson, William Pennoyer, and Martin Noell, who were handed offices to farm the customs and excise during the Interregnum. These merchants invested their capital into the new system of government financing which emerged in England to fund the Civil War.¹⁵² The involvement of merchants in government contracting and tax farming demonstrates how the Civil War generated profits, not just destruction. While English land and overseas trade were unreliable business options for merchants during the 1640s, the material and financial demands of war created new investment opportunities. As the case of the Martin Noell aptly shows, the profits that some London businessmen made from financing the parliamentary war machine found their way into overseas investment, including the Barbados sugar industry.

As well as investing in the war by tax farming and securing government contracts to provision the army and navy, London merchants also sought to minimise the risk to their personal assets caused by an uncertain political and economic climate by depositing their money in more secure locations, such as with goldsmith-bankers or in land overseas. In the mid-seventeenth century there was no centralised banking institution within which wealthy individuals could store their money securely, though both scriveners and goldsmiths did offer this service on a personal basis. Instead, it was established practice for merchants to entrust their money in the hands of a senior servant or apprentice. But new economic opportunities arose for servants during the Civil War, such as joining the army, which caused many to desert their masters. The anonymous author of *The Mystery of the New Fashioned Goldsmiths or Bankers* (1676) suggests that this change in circumstances led London merchants and the landed gentry to increasingly deposit their money with goldsmith-bankers, who were perceived to be a more secure place to store private wealth and

¹⁵¹ Braddick, *The Nerves of State*, pp. 34-41, 95-101; Braddick, *God's Fury, England's Fire*, p. 403. See also William J. Ashworth, *Customs and Excise: Trade, Production, and Consumption in England, 1640-85* (Oxford, 2003).

¹⁵² Wheeler, *The Making of a World Power*, ch. 6, 7 and especially pp. 130-136.

offered investors regular interest payments (four pence per day).¹⁵³ Unfortunately, the accounts for scriveners and goldsmith-bankers like Robert Abbot who operated in the 1640s have not survived, so it is impossible to ascertain how much money London merchants were storing with them during the Civil War. Although, as we will see in Chapter Five, many of the merchants who financed the Barbados sugar boom appear in the ledgers of the goldsmith-banker Edward Backwell for the period from 1663-1672. It is highly likely, therefore, that London merchants were also depositing their money with similar figures before this, and conformed to the general pattern which saw businessmen store increasing amounts of capital with goldsmith-bankers during the 1640s.

London merchants also began to increasingly look beyond the shores of war-torn England during the 1640s for locations to secure their liquid capital. Such an interpretation is supported by the historian Ben Coates, who argues that ‘the impact of the Civil War on overseas merchants was mitigated by the greater range of economic options open to them...they could more readily disengage from the domestic economy because it was relatively easy for them to move their capital out of the country’. In August 1643, for example, the Committee for the Navy noted that large sums of money were being shipped overseas. This flight of capital was also observed by James Howell in 1647 when he described how England’s ‘gold is ingrossed in privat hands, or gon beyond Sea to travell without Licence’.¹⁵⁴ Merchant investment in Barbados was part of a wider pattern which saw English merchants, and particularly those in the City of London, secure their capital in overseas locations during the Civil War.

The first location where London merchants invested their capital in the 1640s was Ireland. A rebellion in Ulster was launched in 1641, which began initially as an elite movement to voice grievances against the

¹⁵³ Anon., *The Mystery of the New Fashioned Goldsmiths or Bankers* (London, 1676), pp. 3-4; Eric Kerridge, *Trade and Banking in Early Modern England* (Manchester, 1988), p. 69; Melton, *Sir Robert Clayton and the origins of English deposit banking*, pp. 18-21, 30-34; Coates, *The Impact of the Civil War on the Economy of London*, pp. 85-86. It is important to emphasise, however, that not all historians agree with this analysis. Melton claims that the *The Mystery of the New Fashioned Goldsmiths* was an ideologically charged pamphlet because it was published in the context of the Stop of the Exchequer. The most important point of contention in this debate is that goldsmith-bankers were operating in England prior to 1640. But this does not falsify the general trend described in the pamphlet: that goldsmith-bankers expanded their business operations and became more important to the English economy in response to the Civil War. See Melton, *Sir Robert Clayton*, 18-20, 30-33, 211-212.

¹⁵⁴ For these quotes, see Coates, *The Impact of the Civil War on the Economy of London*, p. 163, 221, 228.

provincial administration, but soon became framed as a widespread religious conflict. Authors of numerous books and pamphlets began to publicise alleged atrocities inflicted by barbarous Irish Catholics against godly Protestant settlers.¹⁵⁵ The English government, fractured as it was politically and limited in its ability to raise funds, appealed to private individuals to help finance the subjugation of Ireland. The Irish Adventurers Scheme (1642-3) was a Parliamentary initiative to quickly raise capital for the English reconquest of Ireland by using the promise of 2.5 million acres of confiscated Irish land as security. The scheme was thrown open to investors in March 1642 with the passage of the 'Act for the speedy and effectual reducing of the rebels in His Majesty's Kingdom of Ireland'. The legislation aimed to raise £1 million by promising investors profitable Irish land at cheap rates.¹⁵⁶ Karl Bottigheimer has calculated there were approximately 1,533 subscribers to the Irish Adventurers scheme, who invested a total of £306,718. By far the largest number (689, or 45%) fell into the category of 'urban' investors who supplied £139,333, or just under half the total capital invested. This category encompassed adventurers involved in an array of urban trades, most notably merchants (117 members contributing £36,169), merchant-tailors, grocers, and haberdashers. In general, the profile of the investors in the Irish Adventures of 1642-3 tended to be London-based, more merchant than gentry, more inclined to support Parliament, and to be more Independent than Presbyterian in confession.¹⁵⁷

London merchants were the heaviest investors in the Irish Adventurers scheme. Their interests were represented on the committee for Ireland, first convened in September 1642, by the merchants David Watkins, Maurice Thomson, William Thomson, Samuel Moyer, William Pennoyer, Thomas Andrews, Michael Herring, Samuel Avery, Gregory Clement, Samuel Warner, and Robert Wilding. All were religious and political radicals who agitated for reform in London during the 1640s.¹⁵⁸ Militant London merchants were also the impetus behind the Additional Sea Adventure to Ireland, which was sanctioned

¹⁵⁵ See, as an example, Anon., *Worse and Worse Newes from Ireland* (London, 1641). Braddick, *God's Fury, England's Fire*, pp. 166-168; Canny, *Making Ireland British*, ch. 8.

¹⁵⁶ Land would be allocated on a scale according to its differing value in the four provinces. An acre of land in Ulster was worth 4s; in Connacht 6s, in Munster 10s, and Leinster 12s. See Bottigheimer, *English Money and Irish Land*, pp. 40-42.

¹⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 54, 66-73.

¹⁵⁸ Keith Lindley, 'Irish Adventurers and Godly Militants in the 1640s', *Irish Historical Studies*, Vol. 29, No. 113 (1994), pp. 4-8; Brenner, *Merchants and Revolution*, p. 402.

by Parliamentary ordinance in June 1642. To accelerate the subduing of Ireland, the Londoners offered to finance an expeditionary force consisting of 12 ships, 6 pinnaces, and land troops. The commissioners organising the venture included many London merchants, some of whom already had or would develop business interests in the Barbadian plantation economy. Parliament appointed Maurice Thomson, his brothers George and William, William Pennoyer, John Wood, Nicholas Crispe, Thomas Chamberlain, William Willoughby, Richard Shute, Gregory Clement, Samuel Moyer, and Richard Hill to sit on the commission for the Sea Adventure.¹⁵⁹ £43,000 was raised under the ordinance, but when the invasion force reached the shores of Munster in July 1642 it failed in its intended aim to deliver England a decisive military victory over the rebels.¹⁶⁰

The decision taken by merchants, gentry, and ordinary people to invest capital in the Irish Adventurers Scheme of 1642-3 was motivated by both religious and material concerns. As stories of purported atrocities committed against Protestants circulated widely through word-of-mouth and print, investing in the scheme was increasingly seen by the ranks of the godly as a means of combatting the rising threat of Irish popery. Bulstrode Whitelocke, writing in February 1642, encapsulated these anxieties when he exhorted how the 'Reducing of Ireland concerns not only the civil power, but the existence of our religion'.¹⁶¹ Another key motivation, especially for merchants, was to secure alluvial land at cheap rates in an overseas location, which could then be developed and sold on in the future for a profit.¹⁶²

The Adventurers scheme had fallen out of favour among both gentry and merchant investors by late 1642. This was because the conquest of Ireland was not progressing with the speed they had anticipated. Money and forces were being diverted away from the suppression of the Irish rebellion towards

¹⁵⁹ *Acts and Ordinances*, Vol. 1, pp. 9-12, 'The Ordinance for the Sea Adventure to Ireland', 17 June 1642; Brenner, *Merchants and Revolution*, pp. 400-410; Lindley, 'Irish Adventurers', pp. 8-10. Nicholas Crispe subscribed £2600 to the Adventurers scheme (£900 in the original adventure, and a further £1700 under the sea ordinance). Crispe represents the most glaring exception to the trend that those merchants who invested in the Adventurers scheme were religious radicals and London militants who supported Parliament in the Civil War. Bottigheimer, *English Money and Irish Land*, p. 71.

¹⁶⁰ Bottigheimer, *English Money and Irish Land*, pp. 83-84; Blakemore and Murphy, *The British Civil Wars at Sea*, pp. 54-56.

¹⁶¹ Lindley, 'Irish Adventurers and Godly Militants in the 1640s'; The Whitelocke quotation is quoted in Bottigheimer, *English Money and Irish Land*, p. 48.

¹⁶² Bottigheimer, *English Money and Irish Land*, p. 68.

Parliament's fight against the King in England.¹⁶³ The adventurers knew that it would not be until the process of subjugating Ireland had been finalised that the capital they had advanced would become parcels of land. Consequently, private investors lost confidence in the scheme, and in the future refused to finance the reduction of Ireland with hypothetical land grants as collateral. Only one-third of the £1 million which Parliament had originally hoped for had been raised. The doubling ordinance of July 1643 was almost a complete failure: just 171 people decided to invest in this advantageous opportunity, raising a paltry sum of between £10-12,000.¹⁶⁴

Henceforth, large loans to fund the Irish war were raised using the promise of repayment via future revenue from Parliamentary taxation, which expanded in the 1640s and represented a more reliable form of security.¹⁶⁵ It was not until a decade later, when Cromwell had forcefully subdued the rebels in the military campaign of 1649-52, that confiscated Irish land would finally be expropriated to investors. The passage of the 'Act for the Setling of Ireland' in August 1652 and the lotteries of 1653-54 distributed land to the adventurers and soldiers as a form of repayment for their assistance in the reconquest. The harsh Cromwellian settlement radically reshaped land ownership in Ireland. London merchants made substantial gains from the large-scale confiscation of Irish land in the 1650s. Martin Noell, for instance, secured property in Wexford and reported in 1658 that he had 'transplanted much of my interest, and affairs, and relations into Ireland'.¹⁶⁶

Despite showing early promise as a profitable commercial opportunity which could also accomplish key religious objectives, Ireland proved to be too entangled with the unfolding war in the Three Kingdoms to be a site for merchants to make safe investments in the 1640s. Parliament's failure to quell the initial

¹⁶³*Ibid.*, ch. 4.

¹⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 85-93, 112-113.

¹⁶⁵ *Acts and Ordinances*, Vol. 1., pp. 192-197 & 220-221, 'An Ordinance for the encouragement of Adventurers to make new Subscriptions for Towns, Cities, and Lands in Ireland', 14 July 1643 and 'Ordinance Appointing Commissioners to receive Subscriptions in Holland for Ireland', 29 July 1643; Bottigheimer, *English Money and Irish Land*, pp. 85-93, 112-113. For the expansion of Parliamentary revenue from taxation in the 1640s, see Michael J. Braddick, *Parliamentary Taxation in Seventeenth-Century England: Local Administration and Response* (Woodbridge, 1994); Braddick, *The Nerves of State*, pp. 16-18 & ch. 5.

¹⁶⁶ For the 'Act for the Setling of Ireland', 12 August 1652, see *Acts and Ordinances*, Vol. 2, pp. 598-603. For the Cromwellian settlement, see Bottigheimer, *English Money and Irish Land*, ch. 5 & 6. Noell's 1658 statement is quoted in, Donoghue, *Fire Under the Ashes*, p. 218.

rebellion in Ulster caused this local conflict to develop into a protracted and widespread war of resistance, meaning that owning Irish land presented similar risks to possessing land in England (namely that it could be ruined by warfare). Indeed, during the winter of 1643-44 it looked possible that Anglo-Scottish forces might be compelled to temporarily retreat from Ireland, placing the adventurers' investments in grave danger. Some investors panicked when faced with these risks and chose to sell their shares for a loss.¹⁶⁷ With Irish land appearing to be a less promising investment by 1643, London merchants increasingly looked across the Atlantic for a place to secure and augment their fortunes.

The second overseas location where merchants invested their liquid capital in the 1640s was Barbados, which by the middle of the decade was showing clear signs that it was undergoing an export boom due to successful experiments with indigo, ginger, and sugar cultivation. This commercial dynamism caused the price of land to rise rapidly on the island. As early as 1637 there were complaints that 'land is verie deare in this place', but it was the onset of the sugar boom which caused an extraordinary increase in land prices on Barbados.¹⁶⁸ One member of the Hartlib Circle (probably Benjamin Worsley), described how, 'by falling upon new commodities', Barbados had 'within the space of 10 yeeres...so prospered that their ground which was at first worth nothing almost is now dearer then in England'.¹⁶⁹ Such statements are supported by quantitative evidence collated by Russell Menard, which reveals that the price of land saw a fivefold increase from £1.30 BMC per acre in 1640 to £5.50 BMC in 1650, making it a potentially lucrative investment for merchants.¹⁷⁰

An analysis of surviving source material detailing Barbadian land transactions in the 1640s, most of which can be found in the deed books held at the Barbados Department of Archives, reveal how 64 different English merchants, operating alone or in partnership, purchased 5739 acres of land on Barbados between 1640 and 1650 (see Table 2.1, below). Barbados is a small island of only 106,000 acres, meaning that

¹⁶⁷ Bottigheimer, *English Money and Irish Land*, p. 87.

¹⁶⁸ NRS, Hay Papers, GD34/924/7, Peter Hay to Archibald Hay, 29 September 1637.

¹⁶⁹ Hartlib Papers, 'A Memorandum of the Virginia Plantation' [undated], 61/5/1A-2B. For further information about Benjamin Worsley's colonial activities and intellectual interests, see Thomas Leng, *Benjamin Worsley (1618-1677): Trade, Interest, and the Spirit in Revolutionary England* (Woodbridge, 2008).

¹⁷⁰ For changing Barbadian land prices, see McCusker and Menard, 'The Sugar Industry in the Seventeenth Century', p. 299, Table 9.5.

English merchants acquired an interest in approximately 5 percent of all the land on Barbados during the 1640s, a high proportion of which was probably alluvial land suitable for the cultivation of high-quality sugar cane.¹⁷¹ Menard has calculated that merchant investments in the 1640s injected £25,000 sterling into the Barbadian economy, which when adjusted for inflation, approximates to £6 million in today's money.¹⁷² Important for the purposes of my argument is that 84 percent of the deeds of sale on Barbados in the 1640s involving English merchants purchasing land are clustered between the years from 1643 to 1648. To reiterate, this was precisely the time that the disruption generated by the Civil War was at its height.

¹⁷¹ My figures here differ to those collated by Russell Menard. He found that 75 English merchants purchased Barbadian land in the 1640s. See Menard, *Sweet Negotiations*, p. 52. Menard does not provide a copy of the database he used to calculate this figure in the appendix to his book. Without access to his raw data, it is not possible for me to be certain why Menard found 11 more merchants involved in Barbadian land transactions in the 1640s than I did. If forced to speculate, however, I would think that it is because Menard included those referred to as 'London gent' in Barbados deeds within his analysis, which I purposefully excluded because my study is focused solely on merchants.

¹⁷² Menard, *Sweet Negotiations*, p. 52. For the calculation of the merchant's investment in 2018 money the Bank of England's Inflation Calculator was used: <https://www.bankofengland.co.uk/monetary-policy/inflation/inflation-calculator> (Accessed 19/02/2019).

The involvement of English merchants in the Barbados land market rose to a 'powerful crescendo' in 1647. In this year alone, 33 English merchants obtained 2294.5 acres on the island (see Table 2.1, above).¹⁷³ It is important to note, therefore, that in 1647 the economy of London saw another sharp downturn and popular politics in England had once again turned increasingly radical. The New Model Army had occupied London in August, prompting the East India Company to refuse to sell its wares, foreign merchants to withdraw their capital from the city, the value of sterling to drop in international markets, and London merchants to refuse to bring their bullion to the mint.¹⁷⁴ The King's efforts to secure himself a favourable settlement involved exploiting the fractures emerging in the Parliamentary camp. The New Model Army was quickly becoming a powerful political player separate from Parliament, while revolutionary ideas about implementing a programme for social levelling (one method for which was the redistribution of wealth and private property) were being discussed publicly during the Putney debates. Such fractious and radical politics were reminiscent of the polarised religious debates during the paper war of 1642, raising the possibility that the resumption of outright hostilities was imminent.¹⁷⁵ The wider political and economic context of 1647 was one of confusion and financial crisis, and the City of London was at the epicentre of this national disorder. Is it any surprise, then, that in this year above all others London merchants looked overseas for a more secure location to invest their money?

Merchants did not just invest in land, but also movable property. Chattel slaves were brought to Barbados from West Africa in increasing numbers by many of the same merchants who were also purchasing plantations on the island. Historians have developed several theories to explain the trend towards African slavery on Barbados, which intensified during the 1640s. We can be certain that the transition from servitude to slavery on Barbados was not due to a decline in the supply of servants: transportation of indentured servants, convicts, and prisoners of war to the American colonies increased during the Interregnum due to the successive military engagements in the Three Kingdoms, and only began to decline after 1660. Nor was it caused by the low price of enslaved Africans when compared to servants:

¹⁷³ My figures here differ to those collated by Russell Menard. He found that 22 merchants had purchased 1654.5 acres in 1647. See Menard, *Sweet Negotiations*, pp. 52-53. My analysis is more complete than Menard's because it draws on a broader range of source material.

¹⁷⁴ Coates, *The Impact of the Civil War on the Economy of London*, pp. 227-229.

¹⁷⁵ Braddick, *God's Fury, England's Fire*, pp. 479-506 & ch. 18.

the price for a healthy enslaved African rose from £16.50 BMC in 1640 to £27.70 BMC in 1650, an increase of nearly 60 percent. Explanations have instead focused on the demands of sugar as a labour-intensive crop, and that it was 'easier' to discipline an enslaved African to perform hard plantation work than it was to compel white servants to carry out the same exhausting tasks.¹⁷⁶ But the rapid expansion of African slavery on Barbados in the 1640s was not just caused by the difficulties encountered by planters in getting their servants to cultivate and process sugar cane, but also the efforts of English merchants to secure their capital overseas.

The high value of labour on Barbados and the fact that enslaved Africans were the perpetual property of their masters (and theoretically could even create more value over time by bearing children) meant that English merchants chose to invest their capital in slave trading ventures to West Africa and populating their newly-bought plantations with chattel slaves. In his journal Henry Whistler noted in 1655 how on Barbados the 'miserabell Negors [were] borne to perpetuall slavery with thay and thayer seed', and that Englishmen commodified African bodies by purposefully encouraging breeding. According to Whistler, male slaves were permitted to have multiple wives, presumably to facilitate reproduction. An enslaved child was worth £5 BMC at birth, and because they were seen as a commodity, some planters reportedly had '30 [slaves] more or less about 4 or 5 years old: they sele them from one to the other as we doue shepe'.¹⁷⁷ As well as having an inherent value, once they reached maturity enslaved Africans also produced extra profit through their labour. Thomas Povey, the colonial bureaucrat and close associate of the Barbados plantation owner Martin Noell, stressed how enslaved Africans were worth heavy

¹⁷⁶ Menard, *Sweet Negotiations*, pp. 32-36, 45-47; Kenneth Morgan, *Slavery and the British Empire: From Africa to America* (Oxford, 2007), p. 27. For a broader discussion of the reasons behind the transition from servitude to slavery at colonies in the British Atlantic World other than Barbados, a demographic transformation which occurred primarily in the second half of the seventeenth century, see John J. McCusker and Russell R. Menard, 'The Origins of Slavery in the Americas', in Robert L. Paquette and Mark M. Smith, *The Oxford Handbook of Slavery in the Americas* (Oxford, 2010), pp. 275-292.

¹⁷⁷ Firth, ed., *The Narrative of General Venables*, Appendix E., 'Extracts from Henry Whistler's Journal of the West India Expedition', pp. 145-7. Despite Whistler's comments about the efforts of white planters to encourage reproduction among their African slaves, it is important to emphasise that brutal labour regimes and the prevalence of tropical disease meant that the slave population of the British Caribbean did not see any natural increase until the nineteenth century. Before this, the plantation system on Barbados could only be maintained through continual inputs of enslaved Africans via the transatlantic slave trade. Stanley L. Engerman, 'A Population History of the Caribbean', in M. R. Haines and R. H. Steckel, eds, *A Population History of North America* (Cambridge, 2000), pp. 503-510; Newman, *A New World of Labor*, p. 214.

investment, observing that the '20,000 Negroes who subsist merely of the easye fruits of the Earth who by their labour doe rayse 200000lbs sterl. yearly'.¹⁷⁸

Historians have tended to view colonial enterprise in seventeenth-century America as an inherently risky venture, due to the high incidence of failure.¹⁷⁹ But Barbados was unusual in this regard, as it was a location where English planters and merchants could make secure investments in land and enslaved Africans. This was due to a variety of intersecting environmental, geographical, and political factors. Richard Dunn has suggested that there were a specific set of environmental conditions and geographical features present on Barbados which help to explain why this island was the location where large-scale sugar cultivation was successfully pioneered in the English empire. This is an argument based around the premise of 'Barbadian exceptionalism'. It proposes that the environment and geography of Barbados was ideal for the development of a plantation economy. The combination of a salubrious climate, high levels of annual rainfall, and the rich soil found in the uplands of Barbados meant that when Englishmen began experimenting with sugar cane in the mid-seventeenth century, their yields were bountiful and of a high quality.¹⁸⁰

The geographical location of Barbados was also favourable for the establishment of a stable, secure, and profitable English colony in the tropics. Barbados was well situated to receive the vessels which carried manpower and supplies to the infant English colonies in the Lesser Antilles, and as their first port of call in the Americas, often received the best provisions. Prevailing trade winds and transatlantic currents deposited these ships within the proximity of Barbados in the eastern Caribbean, and enabled those merchants who sailed from port towns in northern Europe, such as London and Amsterdam, to make a swift six-week journey westward across the ocean. Moreover, as an Atlantic-facing island, Barbados was the first place in the Caribbean region to become firmly integrated into the slave trading networks forged

¹⁷⁸ Quoted in Shaw, *Everyday Life in the Early English Caribbean*, p. 54.

¹⁷⁹ E.g. Kupperman, *Providence Island*.

¹⁸⁰ Dunn, *Sugar and Slaves*, p. 18 & 62.

by merchants. It was for this reason, according to Dunn, that planters on Barbados were afforded the best and most consistent supply of indentured servants and enslaved Africans.¹⁸¹

Since the written record began, it appears that the types of natural disasters and foreign invasions which repeatedly devastated the societies and economies of other European colonies in the Caribbean region were infrequent on Barbados. This is part of the explanation for why the island was safe for merchant investment and why the slave-sugar system was able to so quickly develop on Barbados without interruption. Earthquakes generated at the Lesser Antilles subduction zone pose a threat to the inhabitants of all the islands in the eastern Caribbean, including those on Barbados. However, when compared with the tectonic threats created by the Enriquillo–Plantain Garden fault zone, which straddles the large islands of the Greater Antilles, Barbados is located in an area of relatively low seismic activity.¹⁸² It has therefore consistently escaped the destructive power of the volcanic eruptions which destroyed urban settlements on Montserrat (1995), along with the tremors which intermittently devastate Jamaica (1692 & 1907) and Haiti (1770 & 2010). Barbados also lies outside of the principal hurricane belt, and consequently the island also tends to avoid the high-intensity tropical storms which sweep across the Atlantic every year between June and November. In 1669, one inhabitant of Barbados wrote that ‘heere in this Iland it hath not been ever knowne that ever were any Hurrycanes’.¹⁸³

As the easternmost island in the Lesser Antilles archipelago, the remote location of Barbados meant that the island was highly conducive to the development of a plantation economy, and was a safer site for capital investment than some other colonies in the tropics. Barbados is 174km away from the nearest island, St Lucia, and in the early modern period was over 500km from the centre of Spanish power in mainland South America. Geographical isolation helped to minimise the threat posed by Amerindian raids and incursions by other European powers. Such attacks seriously stunted colonial development, and

¹⁸¹ *Ibid.*, p. 18 & 62.

¹⁸² R. D. Koehler et al., ‘Enriquillo–Plantain Garden fault zone in Jamaica: paleoseismology and seismic hazard’, *Bulletin of the Seismological Society of America*, Vol. 103, No. 2A (2013), pp. 971-983.

¹⁸³ TNA, CO 1/24, f. 164. A pamphlet produced in 1638 evocatively captured the devastation which such disasters could wreak on an infant colony in the Caribbean: Anon., *News and strange Newes from the St. Christophers of a tempestuous Spirit, which is called by the Indians a Hurrin-cano or whirlwind. Which happeneth in many of those Ilands of America or the West-Indies, as it did in August last, about the 5. Day. 1638* (London, 1638).

in some cases could even lead to the ruined settlement being permanently abandoned by English colonisers. Other promising settlements, such as the Providence Island colony located near Nicaragua, were invaded and ultimately destroyed in the early 1640s because they were located within the sphere of influence of the Spanish Empire. The unforeseen invasion caused the Puritan grandees who invested heavily in the Providence Island scheme to lose large sums of money (the total debt in 1650 was £18,898), and the colony was abandoned.¹⁸⁴ Imperial contests and warfare were thus crucial to whether a nascent colony would endure in the tropics. Jamaica only managed to survive its first few decades deep within the Spanish zone of power in the Greater Antilles because the Spanish already had a settlement there which the English could garrison with soldiers, and because, as a royal colony, it enjoyed massive military and financial support from the Stuart monarchy.¹⁸⁵

The remote geography of Barbados also enabled colonists living there to have a unique relationship with local indigenous peoples, known as the Kalinago, which was unparalleled elsewhere in the Caribbean. Carolyn Arena has argued that the colony's isolated location at the edge of the Lesser Antilles island chain meant that Barbadians could benefit from the labour and knowledge of enslaved Indians without being under threat of violent reprisals for their exploitative actions. Although archaeological evidence confirms that the island was once settled by the Kalinago and integrated into their extensive trade routes, by the time English colonisers arrived in 1627 the island was uninhabited. This meant that, unlike at other islands in the Lesser Antilles such as St. Kitts, Montserrat, Antigua, Dominica, St. Lucia, and St. Vincent, the first English settlers of Barbados did not have to negotiate with existing Indian polities, nor fear the prospect of armed conflict with the Kalinago. But Barbados was still close enough to slave-trading markets on the North and South American mainland to be able to exploit the local knowledge and labour of enslaved Indians. Other colonies were not situated in such a fortunate location. For instance, in a

¹⁸⁴ Kupperman, *Providence Island*, p. 317. For more on the Providence Island Company, see A. P. Newton, *The Colonising Activities of the English Puritans: The Last Phase of the Elizabethan Struggle with Spain* (New Haven, 1914).

¹⁸⁵ Carla Gardina Pestana, *The English Conquest of Jamaica: Oliver Cromwell's Bid for Empire* (Cambridge, Mass., 2017), ch. 7; Amanda J. Snyder, 'Reassessing Jamayca Española: Spanish Fortifications and English Designs in Jamaica,' in Roper, ed., *The Torrid Zone*, 92-104; James Robertson, 'Making Jamaica English: Priorities and Processes,' in Roper, ed., *The Torrid Zone*, 105-117. For more on the importance of imperial contests and warfare to settlement patterns in the Caribbean, see John C. Appleby, 'English Settlement in the Lesser Antilles during War and Peace, 1603-1660,' in Paquette and Engerman, eds, *The Lesser Antilles in the Age of European Expansion*, pp. 165-181.

petition written in August 1655 by some of the 'poore inhabitants of this Island of Antigua' to the Barbadian governor Daniel Searle, Englishmen on Antigua complained about the mismanagement of their own governor, Christopher Raynell, whose poor leadership they feared would exacerbate the issues surrounding their 'safeteyes against a continuall invadinge enemy the Indians'.¹⁸⁶

Besides these environmental and geographical features, which minimised the threat posed by the usual risks to colonial enterprise, the overseas plantations were an ideal location for investing capital because they were already familiar to many traders and were supported by the same legal structure that protected private property rights in England. The governor of Barbados Phillip Bell also deliberately fostered a climate of political security on the island during the tumultuous civil war years. Bell was an experienced colonial administrator, and during his time as governor on Bermuda (1626-29) and Providence Island (1631-36) had developed ties with prominent members of the puritan aristocracy in England and established a close working relationship with London merchants such as Maurice Thomson.¹⁸⁷ The importance of Phillip Bell's leadership in stabilising the island's political affairs is supported by some seventeenth-century sources, which state that Barbados did not 'increase in wealth or trade' until 'one Capt Phillip Bell was by the Earle of Carlisle appointed Governor'. The fact that Bell had a 'plentifull fortune of his owne' and managed plantations on Barbados himself led him to appoint 'men of Estates in the Islands' to sit on his council, eroding the power of the Carlisle proprietors over political affairs on Barbados. With the advice of his council, Bell ratified 'many good lawes' for the 'advancement of the Trade of the Colinye'. For instance, he dismantled the legal apparatus which enabled proprietary agents to collect rent payments from the inhabitants for the Earl of Carlisle.¹⁸⁸

¹⁸⁶ Arena, 'Indian Slaves from Guiana in Seventeenth-Century Barbados'. For the negotiations and violent interactions Europeans had with indigenous peoples elsewhere in the Lesser Antilles, see Murphy, 'Kalinago Colonizers', 17-30. For the Antigua quote, see Bodleian Library, MS Rawlinson A. 29, f. 376, 'The humble petition of Benjamin Langham, Joseph Lee, and Richard Hursey one the behalf of themselves and other the inhabitants of the island of Antigua', August 1655.

¹⁸⁷ For more information on Phillip Bell's role at the Providence Island colony, and his relationship with the London merchant Maurice Thomson, see Kupperman, *Providence Island*, p. 335.

¹⁸⁸ BL, Stowe Ms. 324, f. 4, 'An account of the English Sugar Plantations'.

During his tenure as governor of Barbados between 1641 and 1650 Phillip Bell actively sought to remain impartial in the English Civil War. It was the neutral stance adopted by the Barbados government which made the island a safe prospect for English merchants to invest their capital. When hostilities were first declared, Bell and the colonists tried to play both sides off against each other, claiming that the numerous commissions they received from the representatives of the King and Parliament merely supplemented those which they had previously been sent. Rumours of the imminent purchase of the proprietary patent to the Caribbee isles by the Earl of Warwick, a divisive figure who for some was an ardent Parliamentarian and for others a 'knowne proclaimed rebell and traitore', made choosing a side in the civil war even more pressing. In conjunction with the Barbados Assembly, Bell called a meeting of all the freeholders on the island so that they could deliberate on the issue. Following the vote, Bell reported that 'every parish declared themselves resolutely for the maintenance of their peace and present government, and to admit of no alterations or new comissions from eyther side'.¹⁸⁹

In 1645, this neutrality pact was articulated in an official declaration, in which the freeholders vowed 'not to receive any alteration of government, until God shall be so merciful unto us as to unite the king and Parliament'.¹⁹⁰ This did not, however, deter Royalist and Parliamentarian figureheads in England from continuing to pressure the Barbados planters into taking a decisive position. By the early summer of 1646, James Parker could report to John Winthrop that there had been three commissions sent from England to Barbados so far that year, including one from the Earl of Warwick encouraging the assembly 'to profess themselves for the parliament'. But the freeholders refused to 'lay aside their neutralitie', answering each commission by stating 'their willingness to be serviceable to the kingdome, their honour for the parliament, but their yet allegiance to the King'.¹⁹¹ The inhabitants were so eager to remain politically unified that they even promoted a custom in which 'whosoever named the word Roundhead or

¹⁸⁹ NRS, Hay Papers, GD34/924/33, Phillip Bell to Archibald Hay, 21 July 1645.

¹⁹⁰ Quoted in *Proceedings and Debates*, p. 190.

¹⁹¹ *Winthrop Papers*, Vol. 5, pp. 83-85, James Parker to John Winthrop, 24 June 1646. For other primary sources which discuss this policy of political accommodation and neutrality in the Civil War, see Foster, *A briefe relation of the late horrid rebellion* (London, 1650), p. 3; [Anon], *A Brief Relation of the Beginning and Ending of the Troubles of the Barbados, with the true Causes thereof* (London, 1653), p. 1; Newberry Library, Ayer MS 276, f. 1.

Cavalier, should give to all those that heard of him, a Shot [of liquor] and a Turkey to be eaten at his house that made that forfeiture'.¹⁹²

According to Carla Pestana the English inhabitants of Barbados pursued a neutral stance in the Civil War out of a desire to avert a local conflict of their own. By retaining the current governor and maintaining the status quo, the Barbados planter elite hoped to avoid exacerbating political divisions in their own ranks. Such discordance could foment insurrection among the island's growing population of indentured servants and enslaved Africans and threaten the planter's precarious position at the top of the social hierarchy.¹⁹³ This interpretation is probably correct, although we have no primary source evidence which offers direct support for the link between neutrality and the fear of internal uprising.

Another part of the explanation for the position taken by Bell and his government during the 1640s, which until now historians have missed, relates to the importance of continued access to credit markets and merchants operating out of the City of London. Phillip Bell captured the political impasse Barbadian planters found themselves in during the 1640s perfectly when he explained to the Carlisle trustees how 'against the King we are resolved never to be, and without the freindship of ye Perliament and free trade of London ships we are not able to subsist'.¹⁹⁴ As we will see in Chapter Three, access to the London credit market, along with the labourers and provisions offered by merchants in the City, was pivotal for planters on Barbados. The stark reality was that unfettered access to the City of London was essential not just for the prosperity of Barbados, but for its continued survival as a colony. The lack of interest which English merchants had shown in the colony's tobacco during the 1630s had left the Barbadian economy in a depressed state, and the commercial expansion seen during the first half of the 1640s following diversification in agricultural production was under threat if the wrong course was taken regarding the Civil War. As the governor of Barbados, Phillip Bell was necessitated in taking a pragmatic approach, which involved professing loyalty to the King while at the same time ensuring that the trading

¹⁹² Ligon, *True and Exact History*, p. 110.

¹⁹³ Pestana, *English Atlantic in an Age of Revolution*, pp. 37-38.

¹⁹⁴ NRS, Hay Papers, GD34/924/33, Phillip Bell to Archibald Hay, 21 July 1645.

relationship between Barbados and the Parliamentary stronghold of London remained intact. This neutral stance in the Civil War made Barbados, above all other places in the war-ravaged Three Kingdoms, a safe location for English merchants to invest capital.

Before moving on, it is important to highlight how it was not just merchants who invested in the Barbados sugar economy due to the Civil War. Several gentry supporters of Charles I, including Richard Ligon, Thomas Modyford, and Francis Lord Willoughby of Parham, made the decision to flee the turmoil in England and settle on Barbados. These wealthy royalist émigrés arrived on Barbados in increasing numbers during the second half of the 1640s as they sought to avoid persecution in England for their political allegiance. They reinvested their liquidated English assets into acquiring large plantations, constructing sugar refineries, and purchasing indentured servants and enslaved Africans, which helped to hasten the development of the plantation system on the island.¹⁹⁵ This displays a similar pattern to the Irish Adventure of 1642-3, which saw 239 members of the English gentry (or 16% of total investors) subscribe £72,996 to the scheme, alongside a larger contingent of merchants.¹⁹⁶ Francis Lord Willoughby, for example, remonstrated in a letter to his wife that he had come to Barbados after his property in England had been confiscated by Parliament ‘all at one clap’.¹⁹⁷ Richard Ligon told a similar story in the opening passages of his *True and Exact History*. By the summer of 1647 the war in England, which he described as little more than ‘a Barbarous riot’, had left him ‘destitute of a subsistence’. As a follower of Charles I, Ligon increasingly saw himself ‘a stranger in my own Country’, and therefore ‘resolved to lay hold on the first opportunity that may convoy me to any other part of the World, how far distant soever, rather than abide here’.¹⁹⁸ Merchants and gentry on both sides of the political divide looked overseas to Barbados as a place which offered better security from the violence and social dislocation caused by civil war.

¹⁹⁵ Ligon, *True and Exact History*, pp. 66-67; Dunn, *Sugar and Slaves*, pp. 81-82; Gragg, *Englishmen Transplanted*, p. 137.

¹⁹⁶ Bottigheimer, *English Money and Irish Land*, pp. 66-69.

¹⁹⁷ Henry Cary, ed., *Memorials of the Great Civil War in England from 1646 to 1652*, Vol. II (London, 1842), pp. 314-315.

¹⁹⁸ Ligon, *True and Exact History*, p. 40.

By the second half of the 1640s, the rapid commercial success of Barbados had convinced an assertive group of London merchants with vested interests in the Caribbean plantation system to finance the settlement of English colonies in the Indian Ocean using the Barbados model. This represents another example of London merchants seeking to invest their capital in property at overseas locations during the era of the Civil War. Since the 1630s there had been attempts by members of the landed gentry and the East Indies interloper Sir William Courteen, who was also the original merchant financier of the Barbados colony, to try to establish a more permanent English presence in the Indian Ocean. By 1642 the Courteen association had gone bankrupt, leaving the remnants of his East Indian interloping operation in the hands of Maurice Thomson and his business partners. In subsequent years this new interloping group came to include many merchants with interests in Barbados sugar production and slave ownership, including, besides Thomson himself, Martin Noell, William Pennoyer, Richard Batson, Jeremy Blackman, and Thomas Andrews.¹⁹⁹ It is striking that the business associates and family members of Maurice Thomson were the primary investors in all three of the opportunities which arose for English merchants to invest in land overseas during the 1640s: the Irish Adventurers scheme, the Barbados sugar boom, and the effort to establish colonies in the Indian Ocean. In 1645 this amorphous group of merchants financed an expedition to settle 140 colonists at St. Augustine's Bay on the south coast of Madagascar, which was forced to be abandoned just a year later.²⁰⁰ This failure, similar as it was to other unsuccessful settlement efforts in North America and the Caribbean (where the English had later seen success), did not discourage these merchants from pursuing their colonial ambitions in the Indian Ocean.

By 1649 the Thomson association had formulated a new project to establish plantations at Pulau Run (in the Banda Islands, Southeast Asia) and Assada (an island, now called Nosy Be, just off the coast of northern Madagascar). The Assada adventurers outlined their plan to the directorate of the East India Company in November 1649. Having already raised £80,000 to settle a colony at Assada, they intended

¹⁹⁹ It is probable that John Wood and Michael Davison (also merchants with Barbados interests) were also part of this East Indies interloping group, and provided financial assistance to the effort to establish a plantation on Assada. See Brenner, *Merchants and Revolution*, pp. 168-181, 192-193.

²⁰⁰ For the 1645 colonisation expedition to Madagascar, see *CCMEIC*, Vol. 3., pp. XXII-XXIII; Brenner, *Merchants and Revolution*, p. 177; Edmond Smith, "Canaanising Madagascar": Africa in English imperial imagination, 1635-1650', *Itinerario*, Vol. 39, No. 2 (2015), pp. 289-290.

for the island to function as both a site of plantation production and the nexus of a global trade with Africa, Asia, and the Americas.²⁰¹ Promotional literature commissioned to attract planters to settle in the colony drew explicit connections between Barbados and Assada. Robert Hunt's pamphlet *The Island of Assada* (1650) argued that because both islands lay at thirteen degrees latitude and were of similar size, English settlers would be able to use the salubrious climate to cultivate a variety of profitable commodities from both the West and East Indies, such as sugar cane, indigo, cotton, tobacco, ginger, pepper, and rice. Indentured servants and an enslaved workforce would provide the labour necessary for plantation agriculture and the two hundred sugar mills he believed would soon operate on the island. While Hunt thought that the cost to transport and provision twenty English servants would total £300 at both Barbados and Assada, he also projected that the proximity of Assada to slave trading markets on the African coast guaranteed that slaves would be inexpensive. The vast distances and risks associated with transporting enslaved Africans across the Atlantic to the English Caribbean meant that one hundred 'negroes' cost planters on Barbados £2700, while at Assada the same number of enslaved labourers would cost only £100.²⁰²

Despite this optimism, a lack of institutional support from the East India Company, disease, and violent interactions with indigenous communities in the early 1650s quickly rendered the endeavour to establish a colony on Madagascar with an economy based around plantation slavery a failure.²⁰³ The Assada adventurers' abortive colonisation scheme demonstrates how the rising value of land and enslaved Africans on Barbados during the 1640s encouraged merchants to expend huge sums to try to create similar investment opportunities elsewhere: even in locations as distant as the southwest Indian Ocean. Because of the rapid prosperity it had brought to merchants and planters, the Barbadian system of

²⁰¹ CCMEIC, Vol. 3., pp. 369-372; Roper, *Advancing Empire*, pp. 146-149.

²⁰² Robert Hunt, *The Island of Assada* (London, 1650), pp. 3-4.

²⁰³ Alison Games, *The Web of Empire: English Cosmopolitans in an Age of Expansion 1560-1660* (Oxford, 2008), pp. 210-211; Smith, "'Canaanising Madagascar'", p. 290-293.

plantation slavery served as an influential model for colonial development for the duration of the seventeenth century.²⁰⁴

Conclusion

This chapter has answered two questions: where did the merchant capital that was invested in Barbados sugar production originate, and why did English merchants choose to invest such large sums of money in a distant Caribbean island during the 1640s? It began by identifying the 23 most important merchant investors in the sugar boom. We then separated them into six categories based on their commercial interests during the 1630s (before they invested in Barbados sugar). Most had previously been involved in American trade in some form, but others had more diverse career paths. Some were participants in West African commerce, the trade to the East Indies and Levant, transnational trade to Brazil, and the cloth trade to Northern Europe and France. Others have no recorded background in trade until their investments in land and labour on Barbados. It has been argued, therefore, that the merchant capital used to finance the expansion of sugar production and African slavery on Barbados came from a broad array of sources and had global origins. This has ramifications for our understanding of the origins of plantation slavery in the British empire, as it highlights how interconnected the Caribbean plantation system was with the other regions of the world touched by England's overseas expansion from very early on.

We also evaluated the role that investments in sugar and slavery on Barbados played in the careers of merchants in early modern England. There were two factors which explain the rapid rise of merchants

²⁰⁴ In the 1680s, for example, the East India Company used the Barbados model of plantation slavery to try to render its small South Atlantic colony of St. Helena more profitable. Michael D. Bennett, 'The East India Company, Transnational Interactions, and the Formation of Forced Labour Regimes' (Masters by Research Dissertation, University of Kent, 2016), ch. 3.

who were formerly outside of the City elite during the 1640s. First, and most important, their allegiance in the Civil War. This could make or break a career, because of the repercussions it had for a businessman's ability to exert political influence and secure government offices. Second, the capital generated through investments in the Barbados sugar boom. Those merchants who supported Parliament in the Civil War and invested in Barbados sugar during the 1640s were disproportionately represented in the directorate of established trading companies and became part of London's aldermanic elite in the 1650s and 1660s, suggesting that these two events stimulated the careers of some London merchants in the mid-seventeenth century.

We then moved on to explore why London merchants invested so heavily in Barbados, concluding that it was principally due to external political and economic factors unique to the 1640s: the commercial opportunity presented by the collapse of the Brazilian sugar industry, and the English Civil War. The insecurity produced by civil war drove English merchants to diversify their business portfolios. In normal circumstances land ownership in England was the most stable investment option available to merchants in the seventeenth century. But the Civil War proved to be transformative in this regard, because it suddenly made English land much more insecure due to warfare and the threat of sequestration. The war also put overseas trade into an unsettled state. As a result, merchants invested in the war through government contracting and tax farming, stored their money with goldsmith-bankers, and increasingly looked overseas for a place to tie-up their liquid capital. London merchants poured their money into Irish land through the Adventurers scheme in the period from 1642-3. But Parliament's failure to quell the Irish rebellion quickly made investing capital in the future promise of Irish land a less attractive prospect by late 1643.

Across the Atlantic the decline in the Brazilian sugar industry meant that speculating in Barbados sugar offered a prime commercial opportunity for English merchants looking to invest their assets overseas. Securing capital in plantations and enslaved Africans on Barbados represented a more profitable and reliable investment than purchasing land and real estate in England or Ireland during the 1640s. This was because the colony's government articulated an official policy of neutrality in the Civil War. The island

also possessed some inherent geographical and environmental advantages which offered enhanced protection from many of the usual risks to colonial enterprise. By the late 1640s, merchant success in transforming Barbados into a burgeoning centre of plantation production and a commercial entrepot inspired a group of London merchants to pool their capital and attempt to create new investment opportunities by replicating the Barbados system of plantation slavery in the southwest Indian Ocean. Despite raising large amounts of start-up capital to finance several colonising ventures, their efforts were ultimately unsuccessful.

The next chapter will explore in greater detail *how* English merchants were involved with the Barbados sugar economy during the 1640s and 1650s. It will also re-evaluate the argument that local planters reinvested the capital they generated through the production of minor staples such as tobacco and cotton into the development of sugar plantations.

Chapter Three. Merchants, Planters, and the Development of the Barbados Plantation Economy, 1643-1660

In the previous chapter we saw that Barbados was important for English merchants, as it offered them a secure location to invest their liquid capital in the 1640s. This chapter, by contrast, will explore how English merchants were important to the economic development of Barbados. More precisely, it will analyse how merchants contributed the expansion of the sugar industry and the plantation system. While other historians, such as Russell Menard and Larry Gragg, have sketched the role that some English merchants played in purchasing land on Barbados and shipping enslaved Africans to the island, they have not detailed in full the wide range of commercial activities that merchants trading to Barbados participated in during the mid-seventeenth century. Consequently, the significance of these merchants in transforming the society and economy of Barbados has been understated.

This chapter will analyse the involvement of English merchants in the Barbadian plantation economy between 1643 and 1660. It argues that English merchants precipitated the sugar boom in four major ways. First, they speculated in the sugar industry by directly purchasing tracts of land on the island and constructing refineries. Second, they extended generous credit to Barbadian planters, which enabled them to afford to construct sugar refineries and acquire enslaved Africans. Third, they supplied the island with labour by transporting indentured servants and financing slave trading voyages to West Africa. These forced labourers were sold to plantation owners, before being compelled by their masters to cultivate tropical commodities which would be later sold in European markets. Fourth, they supplied the raw materials necessary for the rapid development of the sugar industry. The plantation system could not have functioned without the lumber needed to construct sugar refineries, the clothes used to dress indentured servants and enslaved Africans, the oxen and horses needed to drive the sugar mills, and the donkeys to transport commodities to storehouses along the coast. An injection of merchant capital into the Barbadian economy in the 1640s and 1650s caused changes to the composition of the island's labour

force and the organisation of landed estates into integrated plantations, which had far-reaching implications for the future development of the British Atlantic World.

Ideally, this chapter would evaluate the comparative importance of merchant capital to the development of the Barbadian sugar industry by analysing the contributions of those we know invested capital in turn: London merchants, merchants in the English outports, Dutch merchants, members of the English gentry, and Barbadian planters. Unfortunately, not enough account books and other forms of quantitative evidence has survived to be able write an economic history of Barbados with this level of precision for the mid-seventeenth century. Nonetheless, the final section of this chapter will go some way towards investigating the relative importance of merchant capital by reassessing the argument that Barbadian planters reinvested the profits generated from the sale of tobacco into the cultivation of sugar and the construction of refineries. The poor-quality tobacco produced on Barbados during the 1630s meant that there was little chance for planters to generate enough surplus capital to have been able to afford to set-up a sugar plantation without external assistance in the 1640s. Moreover, a close reading of the available source material reveals that it was trade, not plantation production, which provided most of the start-up capital necessary for start-up planters to initiate sugar production. Renowned planters such as James Drax and William Hilliard came from a mercantile background, and continued to engage in trade during the 1640s and 1650s.

1. Merchant investments in Barbadian land

This section will analyse how English merchants speculated in the Barbados land market during the 1640s and 1650s. It will draw upon novel source material to develop a more comprehensive study of merchant land purchases than that advanced by Russell Menard. My database reveals how there were 107 English merchants, operating alone or in partnership, who obtained a financial interest in Barbadian land between

1640 and 1660. The importance of merchants based in the City of London in providing capital investment to fund the expansion of the early English empire is highlighted by the fact that 84 percent of these 107 persons who purchased plantations on Barbados resided in London (see Table A4, Appendix 2). By accelerating the process through which land was aggregated in the hands of fewer owners, populating plantations with enslaved Africans, and financing the construction of refineries and windmills, London merchants increased the productivity of the Barbados sugar industry and paved the way for the emergence of the integrated plantation.

Although we have numerous sources which refer to London merchants owning land on Barbados in the mid-seventeenth century, the deeds recording their property transactions have not all survived at the Barbados Department of Archives. There is substantial evidence, however, for land transactions involving the London merchants Martin Noell and Richard Batson for the 1640s and 1650s (see Tables 3.1 and 3.2, below). The evidence shows how, in conjunction with family members on Barbados, Noell and Batson purchased large tracts of land on the island in the mid-1640s, invested in the development of the sugar industry by constructing sugar mills and purchasing labour and livestock over the course of the following decade, before selling many of their properties in the late 1650s and early 1660s. The role of English merchants in purchasing plantations on Barbados supports Richard Pares' argument that there was not a pronounced division of labour between merchants and planters in the mid-seventeenth century. Merchants who traded to the colonies and marketed colonial goods were often directly involved in plantation production too.¹

Scattered across various archives is further evidence for the direct investments made by English merchants into Barbadian plantations during the 1640s. We know that the eminent London merchants Maurice Thomson and William Pennoyer co-owned plantations on Barbados, because in May 1649 they were given license to transport 50 draught horses 'for the service of their sugar works there'.² A source

¹ Pares, *Merchants and Planters*, pp. 29-30. Robert Brenner has reached similar conclusions, arguing that there was a generational shift in the London merchant community which produced a distinct group of 'merchant-planters' in the early seventeenth century. Brenner, *Merchants and Revolution*, p. 116.

² *CSPC AWI*, Vol. 1, p. 329, 22 May 1649.

held at the London Metropolitan Archives provides some further details on Pennoyer's property holdings on the island. In February 1643 Charles Stobart, the apprentice of Pennoyer and his current Barbados factor, signed over the title to a 60-acre plantation to his master in London. The plantation was ideal for a merchant, located as it was near the commercial hub of St. Michael (Bridgetown), and containing a house, cattle, servants, and a storehouse near the Indian Bridge.³

³ Another former apprentice and Barbados factor for Pennoyer in the 1640s, Michael Davison, gave a deposition before the Mayors Court of London in 1654 regarding Pennoyer's 60-acre plantation. By the 1650s Davison himself was a London merchant with close business ties to the island. LMA, MCD Box 6, CLA/024/06/006.

Table 3.1 [Redacted]

Table 3.2 [Redacted]

It was common in the 1640s for absentee London merchants to purchase plantations on Barbados and dispatch family members or trusted business partners to the island and oversee their investments. The London merchant Anthony Hooper, for instance, owned a plantation on Barbados in 1645, which was managed by his family relation and business partner Robert Hooper, alongside several other London merchants who had relocated to the island. They were early adopters of African slavery, having transitioned to a majority black workforce by 1654. That year, 35 white servants and 66 enslaved Africans laboured on Robert Hooper's 200-acre plantation.⁴ The brothers John Parris and Thomas Parris had a similar arrangement. John Parris was a slave-trading New England merchant who developed an extensive commercial network in the 1640s that spanned the Atlantic. John Parris arrived in Massachusetts in 1642 but left for Barbados at the height of the sugar boom in 1647, and with the financial assistance of his brother Thomas in London, purchased land and storehouses on the island.⁵

The Guinea Company, a corporate entity made up of merchants interested primarily in West African trade, also owned land on Barbados in the mid-1640s. John Wood, Nicholas Crispe, and Samuel Crispe purchased the plantation using the proceeds of a Guinea company slaving voyage in 1641. When it was appraised in 1644, the plot owned by the company spanned 225 acres and was worth £56 5s. The plantation was largely undeveloped: 175 acres remained as standing wood, and just 50 acres was under cultivation with cotton and provision crops. It is significant that the accounts of the Guinea Company reveal that they owned a plantation on Barbados, while at Virginia (their other base of operations in America) the company did not own land. The tiny island in the eastern Caribbean was clearly a site which London merchants thought possessed great commercial potential in the 1640s when compared to other colonies in the English Atlantic world.⁶

⁴ LMA, MCD Box 2, CLA/024/06/002; Newman, *A New World of Labor*, p. 191.

⁵ BDA, RB3/2, pp. 778-779; BDA, RB3/3, pp. 465-466; BDA, RB3/3, p. 41; BDA, RB3/3, pp. 205-212; BDA, RB3/5, pp. 340-341; BDA, RB3/6, pp. 376-377; BDA, RB3/7, pp. 354-356; BDA, RB3/7, pp. 388-391; BDA, RB3/3, pp. 535-537. See also, Gragg, *Englishman Transplanted*, pp. 138-139.

⁶ TNA, SP 16/540/4, f. 389 & 394, 'Series of documents relating to the affairs of the Guinea Company, from 18th February 1642-43 to 8th July 1647, but mostly of the year 1644'. For the initial 1641 purchase of the land, see BDA, RB3/1, pp. 202-3.

Held at the John Carter Brown Library is an estate plan of a plantation on Barbados produced by the surveyor John Hapcott in 1646 (see Figure 3.1, below).⁷ This map constitutes the earliest visual representation we have of land management in the colony, and as such it is a unique source. In an innovative study, scholars have recently used GIS software to overlay this estate plan on a modern map, and then coordinate an archaeological investigation to explore what material culture can tell us about the transition to sugar monoculture and slavery in the Caribbean.⁸ The estate plan can also yield information about merchant involvement with Barbados during the sugar boom. The 300-acre plantation in St. James parish was measured by Hapcott on 10 October 1646. The London merchants Andrew Riccard, William Williams, and Edwin Browne had just purchased the plantation in partnership through their factor, Thomas Middleton, who himself would soon become a merchant of some repute on the island. Riccard, Williams, and Browne had been active in the East India and Levant companies throughout the 1630s and 1640s, which, as noted in the previous chapter, stands as testament to the global commercial interests of the merchants who invested in the Barbados sugar boom. The estate was rectangular in shape, and stretched from the coast towards the island's gently sloping uplands. This was ideal. Coastal frontage enabled the construction of a storehouse and direct access to shipping, as signified by the English merchant vessel depicted just offshore in the bay, while at the same time providing the owners with a cross section of alluvial land where they could cultivate tropical commodities.

Looking more closely at the estate plan we can see that, at the time it was purchased by the London merchants, the plantation remained largely undeveloped. Approximately one-third of the plantation was 'fallen land' currently under cultivation. There were provision grounds, referred to on the estate plan as 'Potato peece', along with pastures for grazing animals and several stone-built dwelling houses. This left two-thirds of the plantation remaining as standing wood. The number of trees depicted in this parcel of land suggests that, even at locations close to the coast, the process of farm-building was not yet complete. The island was still wooded (though perhaps not thickly) at the onset of the sugar boom.

⁷ John Carter Brown Library, Shelf Et647 1 Ms.

⁸ Douglas V. Armstrong and Matthew C. Reilly, 'The Archaeology of Settler Farms and Early Plantation Life in Seventeenth-Century Barbados,' *Slavery and Abolition*, Vol. 35, No. 3 (2014), pp. 399-417.



Figure 3.1. The Hapcott Estate Plan (1646). 'This Plott Representeth the forme of three hundred acres of Land part of a Plantation called the Fort Plantation of which 300 acres Capt Thomas Middleton of London hath purchased for, and in the names of, Edwin Brown, William Williams, and Andrew Riccard of London marchants...the 300 acres measured by October the tenth anno domini 1646. John Hapcott surveyor'. Courtesy of the John Carter Brown Library.

Farm-building was a time-consuming procedure. Making a plantation fit to be put under cultivation with cash crops could take years: it involved felling trees, clearing land using slash-and-burn techniques, tilling fields, and constructing outbuildings.⁹ In the mid-1640s London merchants displayed a preference of purchasing plantations from tobacco and cotton planters, because they came with ready-cleared land, allowing merchants to forego the prolonged process of farm-building.¹⁰ By the 1650s, absentee merchants tended to buy fully-functioning sugar plantations (often from other London merchants), or enter into partnership with a planter who already possessed one, thus following Ligon's recommendation that it was advisable 'for a man that had money, goods, or Credit, to purchase a Plantation there ready furnished'.¹¹

London merchants did not just spend money on acquiring alluvial land on Barbados, however, but also invested heavily in improving plantations. As the Guinea Company's plantation and the Hapcott estate plan demonstrate, many of the tracts of land obtained by merchants on Barbados in the 1640s were largely underdeveloped at the time of purchase. Only small plots were under cultivation in tobacco, cotton, indigo, and ginger, and there was still a considerable amount of standing wood. Merchant capital transformed these plantations by increasing the amount of land under cultivation in sugar, financing the construction of machinery associated with the refining of sugar cane, and expanding the stock of unfree labour and draught animals available to planters on the island. This had far-reaching consequences. Menard has used such evidence to persuasively argue that 'merchant investors played an important role in shaping the changing organization of the sugar industry in Barbados'.¹²

Prior to the advent of sugar production on Barbados, between 1627 and 1643, land in the interior of the island was readily available for new arrivals and time-expired servants, meaning that tenant farming was only of limited significance. But during the early stages of the sugar boom land aggregation in the hands of fewer and fewer planters was beginning to restrict the opportunities available for free whites to own land, causing an increase in cases of tenancy and emigration from the island. By the 1650s entrepreneurial

⁹ On the farm-building process, see Pares, *Merchants and Planters*, p. 18; Menard, *Sweet Negotiations*, p. 12.

¹⁰ For examples, see BDA, RB 3/1, pp. 26-27, 536-538, 946-947.

¹¹ For examples, see BDA, RB 3/5, pp. 894-896, 906-908; *Complete Book of Emigrants*, p. 366; Ligon, *True and Exact History*, p. 66.

¹² Menard, *Sweet Negotiations*, p. 52, 60.

sugar planters had realised that increased efficiency and therefore greater profits could be gained by augmenting the size of their estates, expanding their stock of unfree labour, and integrating the process of cultivating and processing sugar cane within a single site. Rather than sharing access to a central sugar mill with various other plantation-owners and tenants, as was common in Brazil under what is sometimes known as the ‘dispersed system’, sugar planters on Barbados began to invest in the construction of their own mills. The desire to achieve economies of scale in this manner caused mounting demand for land, labour, and capital on the tiny island. The ‘integrated plantation’, as this form of semi-industrial organisation is often called, was invented on Barbados during the mid-seventeenth-century sugar boom. The integrated sugar plantation forever altered the Atlantic system of plantation slavery, and despite some further innovations (e.g. the gang system of slave management), would be used throughout the Caribbean until Abolition two centuries later.¹³

James Drax is the first planter believed to have operated an integrated plantation. In 1654 the Jesuit priest Antoine Biet exclaimed how it ‘was quite a sight to see 200 slaves working with sugar’ at the Drax Hall plantation.¹⁴ While further research is needed at the Barbados Department of Archives to test this hypothesis, I suspect that because of their large landholdings, ready access to unfree labour, and extensive capital reserves, London merchants were some of the earliest adopters of the integrated plantation in the late 1650s and 1660s. In 1654, for instance, (the same year that Drax is believed to have invented the integrated plantation) the merchant Robert Hooper possessed a 200-acre plantation with a workforce of 101 unfree labourers (35 servants, 66 enslaved Africans), satisfying the optimal ratio of two acres to every one labourer. By the time of his death in 1669 we can be certain Hooper was working an integrated plantation, composed of nearly 350 acres and 150 enslaved Africans. Richard Batson’s 360-acre estate is

¹³ For the integrated plantation, see Menard, *Sweet Negotiations*, pp. 91-99; McCusker and Menard, ‘The Sugar Industry in the Seventeenth Century’, pp. 295-302; Trevor Burnard, *Planters, Merchants, and Slaves: Plantation Societies in British America, 1650-1820* (Chicago, 2015), pp. 4-5, 55-58. For a contemporary description of the management of an integrated plantation, dating to 1679, see Thompson, ‘Henry Drax’s Instructions’, pp. 565-604.

¹⁴ Jerome S. Handler, ed., ‘Father Antoine Biet’s visit to Barbados in 1654’, *Journal of the Barbados Museum and Historical Society*, Vol. 32 (1967), p. 69.

another good example, which by 1670 was operating as an integrated plantation with its own sugar mill and a stock of 157 enslaved Africans.¹⁵

Merchant capital, in the form of both direct investment and extensions of credit, facilitated the rise of the integrated plantation. There were three things needed to set up an integrated plantation: a large estate, slave labour, and machinery to process sugar cane. Generous credit provided by London merchants enabled planters to make these expensive purchases without needing extensive personal reserves of liquid capital. Merchant investment in the 1640s and 1650s also improved Barbadian plantations directly, which had a long-lasting financial impact even after they had sold on their properties. By undertaking the capital-intensive work of aggregating land, acquiring enslaved Africans, and investing in machinery, merchants made it much easier for the estate's new owners to convert it into an integrated plantation at a future date. This is because built improvements and the plantation's existing stock of unfree labour and draught animals were almost always included in the purchase price and transferred to the new owners of the estate.¹⁶ Over several decades, therefore, the interventions of London merchants in the economy of Barbados would transform the organisation of the island's sugar industry. The rise of the integrated plantation in the second half of the seventeenth century enhanced the productive efficiency of the Barbados sugar industry, maintaining the profitability of this enterprise in the face of mounting competition and falling sugar prices in European markets.¹⁷ It is important to remember, however, that the conversion to the integrated plantation was gradual: even in late seventeenth-century Barbados hundreds of small farmers were still growing sugar and producing rum using the dispersed model.¹⁸

¹⁵ For the composition of the labour force on Hooper's plantation, see Newman, *A New World of Labor*, p. 191; Gagg, *Englishmen Transplanted*, p. 136. For Richard Batson, see BDA, RB3/8, ff. 58-63

¹⁶ E.g. The agreement signed between Thomas Noell and Edward Bradbourne in September 1659. Noell agreed to sell a 2000-acre plantation in Surinam, along with 'all boyling houses, mill, mill houses, coppers, scummers, slaves etc'. BDA, RB3/5, pp. 873-879. See also the deed signed between Phillip Banfield and Thomas Batson in May 1662. Along with sale of the plantation came 'sugar canes and their appertunances', 8 white servants, and 24 enslaved Africans. See BDA, RB3/2, pp. 564-567

¹⁷ For a detailed exploration of the productivity gains achieved by Barbadian sugar planters over the course of the seventeenth century, see Menard, *Sweet Negotiations*, ch. 4.

¹⁸ McCusker and Menard, 'The Sugar Industry in the Seventeenth Century', pp. 300-301; Eltis, *Rise of African Slavery*, pp. 202-204.

How did English merchants help to precipitate the rise of the integrated plantation on Barbados? First, merchant capital accelerated the process of land accumulation on the island in the 1640s. By making available large amounts of credit, merchants enabled planters to rapidly increase the size of their estates. Direct investment in plantations during the 1640s was also pivotal, which as we saw in Chapter Two was partly motivated by the desire of English merchants to secure their money in a safe location during the Civil War and to profit from rising land prices. Merchants rarely stopped with purchasing just one plantation, but sought to expand their estates by consuming surrounding land. Merchants did not pioneer this trend: land consolidation had been underway since the 1630s, with planters such as James Holdip and James Drax becoming large landowners by buying up their neighbour's plantations.¹⁹ But London merchants certainly invested greatly in the Barbados land market in the mid-1640s, enhancing the frenzied land speculation caused by the sugar boom. Whether merchants engrossed plantations to try to achieve economies of scale in sugar production or to secure their capital in land (which could then be sold on for a profit in the future) is unclear.

The second way in which merchant capital hastened the emergence of the integrated plantation was by populating plantations on Barbados with rising numbers of enslaved Africans. The role of English merchants in intensifying the transatlantic slave trade to Barbados during the 1640s will be analysed in the next section of this chapter. For present purposes, it is necessary only to mention that in the era of the sugar boom London merchants increased the supply of indentured servants and enslaved Africans to the colony, and extended planters the credit they needed to purchase these expensive human commodities. In the early 1650s plantation-owners on Barbados were beset with a chronic shortage of unfree labour. The ratio for achieving optimal efficiency in sugar production was one labourer for every two acres of land,²⁰ and the plantation inventories we have for this period suggests that most landowners fell well short of this ideal ratio. Menard has presented evidence that plantations owned by London merchants and their family members were some of the first to address the issue of labour shortages by hiring ex-servants as tenants to manage their excess land. Adopting the dispersed system ensured that the owner's sugar mill

¹⁹ For Holdip and Drax's estates in the 1630s, see Gragg, *Englishmen Transplanted*, pp. 27, 99-100, 139-140.

²⁰ Dunn, *Sugar and Slaves*, p. 69.

kept turning and that valuable fertile land was not left fallow. Menard has used the 510-acre Mount Clapham plantation, acquired by Thomas Noell in 1650, to illustrate merchant involvement in institutional changes in the Barbados sugar industry. In 1654 the plantation was undermanned, with a workforce of just fifteen servants and enslaved Africans. Such a chronic lack of workers is probably why Martin Noell was so heavily involved in supplying his family's Barbadian plantations with convict labour during the 1650s. Thomas Noell responded to this massive labour deficiency by leasing 179 acres of his plantation to 24 tenants for an annual rent of £362 BMC. It was only once such labour shortages had been addressed that Mount Clapham could be reorganised as an integrated plantation by its new owners in the early 1670s.²¹

The third way in which investments provided by London merchants assisted in the emergence of the integrated plantation was by financing the construction of sugar mills and other expensive machinery. An infusion of merchant capital initiated institutional changes in the processing of raw cane on Barbados, easing the transition from animal-powered sugar mills to wind and watermills. Other historians, including Menard, have missed how it was London merchants who built the first wind-powered sugar mills on Barbados, which secured sugar planters productivity gains.

Animal mills, driven predominantly by horses and cattle, were used in the mid-1640s at the start of the sugar boom. But having to consistently replace the livestock that succumbed to demanding work regimes constituted a high annual expense for plantation-owners. Sugar mills powered by the elements (e.g. wind and water) eliminated the need to regularly purchase a new stock of draught animals and were more efficient than those driven by horses and cattle: they turned with greater force and thereby extracted more juice from the raw cane. The central plateau of Barbados was an ideal location from which to make use of the prevailing trade winds that blow westward across the Atlantic. A major drawback, however, was that windmills were expensive to construct, requiring an investment of approximately £1000 sterling.²²

²¹ Menard, *Sweet Negotiations*, pp. 91-96; Russell R. Menard, 'Law, credit, the supply of labour, and the organization of sugar production in the colonial Greater Caribbean: a comparison of Brazil and Barbados in the seventeenth century' in John J. McCusker and Kenneth Morgan, eds, *The Early Modern Atlantic Economy* (Cambridge, 2001), pp. 154-162; McCusker and Menard, 'The Sugar Industry in the Seventeenth Century', pp. 295-302.

²² For the greater efficiency and cost of wind-powered sugar mills, see Menard, *Sweet Negotiations*, pp 72-73.

Only those who were well-connected to the London credit market or possessed a large pool of liquid capital could afford to make this investment. The first reference to windmills on Barbados is in June 1647, when the London merchant Walter Leave sold a three-quarters share in the 'Windmill Plantation' to Thomas Matthew (also a London merchant). When windmills and watermills begin to appear more frequently in the inventories of large plantations in the early 1660s, they are mostly associated with estates owned by London merchants and their relatives. For example, in June 1661 Thomas Batson, the nephew and agent of the London merchant Richard Batson, was in possession of a plantation in St. Phillip parish with 'one windmill, cureing house, dwelling house, and boyling house' which was worth 78,000 lb. of sugar.²³ By the close of the century animal-powered sugar mills were used only by planters with small business operations who lacked the means to finance the construction of this new machinery.

Theorists and entrepreneurs in England were seeking new and cheaper methods of grinding sugar. English polymaths with colonial interests, including William Petty, Benjamin Worsley, and Cressy Dymock, played a leading role in experimenting with the sugar refining process. Members of the merchant community with interests in the Caribbean, led by Maurice Thomson, offered financial support to members of the Hartlib circle to assist in the development of an invention for 'a better grinding of canes of sugar'.²⁴ The first details about these trials appear in 1649, when attempts to develop a 'Perpetuus Motus Invention' for the 'grinding of sugar canes' were underway. This machine could supposedly deliver power to the rollers of a sugar mill without the need for an external force. These efforts were stalled, however, until Petty had discussed with some 'Barbados men' knowledgeable about the natural resources of the island about whether there was a 'good store of combustible matter in Barbados'.²⁵

It appears that Cressy Dymock did create a prototype of this new machine, which he sent to leading London millwrights for their appraisal.²⁶ Dymock asserted that there would be a variety of private and

²³ For the 'Windmill Plantation', see BDA, RB3/3, pp. 466-467. For Thomas Batson's windmill, see BDA, RB3/2, pp. 583-585.

²⁴ Hartlib Papers, Ephemerides 1649 Part 3, 28/1/26B-38B.

²⁵ Hartlib Papers, Ephemerides 1649 Part 1, 28/1/1A-13B.

²⁶ Hartlib Papers, Ephemerides 1651 Part 1, 28/2/1A-12A.

public benefits if his ‘engine bee made use of in the Barbados for the grinding of sugar’. He claimed that by eliminating the need for draught animals in the sugar industry planters on Barbados could convert pastures, which were usually left fallow to provide fodder for horses and cattle, into plantations fit for the production of cash crops.²⁷ There is evidence to suggest that this machine was actually experimented with on plantations in the Caribbean. In October 1659 a financial agreement was signed between Cressy Dymock and a syndicate of London merchants regarding ‘an engine invented by the said Cressy Dymock’, which was given to the merchants and conveyed to Barbados in exchange for the large sum of £1623 15s.²⁸

It was London merchants who collaborated with members of the Hartlib Circle to improve the efficiency of sugar milling. They were also the first to try to implement this new technology on Barbadian plantations. Productivity gains were eventually made by plantation-owners on Barbados after they began to harness the elements, and especially wind power, to turn their mills. London merchants were at the forefront of these efforts to foster innovation in the colonial sphere in the mid-seventeenth century, and building upon earlier attempts to develop a ‘Perpetuus Motus Invention’, they pioneered the successful adoption of wind-powered sugar mills. As Paul Slack has shown, the notion of ‘improvement’ became a central part of English discourse and political economy in the 1640s and 1650s.²⁹ But he did not place enough emphasis on how the efforts of the Hartlib Circle to improve agriculture and industry extended beyond England and Ireland. Hartlib and his associates had similar designs for the American colonies, as evidenced by the project to enhance the productivity of the Barbadian sugar industry described here, along also by the scheme to settle a Huguenot colony in Carolina and the plan to reform the government of Virginia and diversify its economy like had been recently achieved on Barbados.³⁰

²⁷ Hartlib Papers, ‘Memorandum About Engines, Dymock’, n.d., 62/8A-B.

²⁸ BDA, RB 3/5, pp. 641-642. The partnership of London merchants was comprised of Isaac Legay, Peter Legay, and Robert Hooper, who co-owned a plantation on Barbados.

²⁹ Paul Slack, *The Invention of Improvement: Information and Material Progress in Seventeenth-Century England* (Oxford, 2015), pp. 91-128.

³⁰ For the Huguenot colonisation scheme, see Thomas Leng, “‘A Potent Plantation Well Armed and Policed’: Huguenots, the Hartlib Circle, and British Colonization in the 1640s”, *The William and Mary Quarterly*, Vol. 66, No. 1 (2009), pp. 173- 194. For the project to reform Virginia, see Leng, *Benjamin Worsley*, pp. 50-52; Peter Thompson, ‘William Bullock’s “Strange Adventure”: A Plan to Transform Seventeenth-Century’, *The William and Mary Quarterly*,

How did merchant plantation ownership on Barbados in the 1640s and 1650s compare to that of other colonies? The fact that absentee London merchants owned plantations in an overseas colony was not in itself remarkable. The 'headright' system of land grants administered by the Virginia Company awarded those who brought colonists and servants to the new colony a 50-acre tract per person transported. Because it was merchants who assumed most of the responsibility for shipping workers to the colonies, men involved in trade to Virginia such as Thomas Stegge quickly began to accumulate large landholdings, becoming involved directly in plantation production.³¹ Elsewhere, Maurice Thomson was co-owner of a 1000-acre plantation on St. Christopher in 1626, Samuel Vassall and Matthew Craddock owned land in New England in the 1630s, and Martin Noell was allotted an enormous 20,000-acre land grant by Cromwell in the newly conquered colony of Jamaica in 1655.³² What was exceptional, though, was the amount of land bought on Barbados by a variety of different London merchants during a single decade, and the volume of investment they poured into the island in such a short period of time. In addition, other than on seventeenth-century Barbados, nowhere else did merchant involvement in a colonial land market precipitate widespread institutional changes in plantation management.

This section has provided a more detailed analysis of land transactions on Barbados in the early years of the sugar boom than ever before. The amount of land bought by London merchants in the 1640s, and the sums of money they invested in the island's economy as a result, was extraordinary when compared to other English colonies. Merchant capital, in the form of direct investment and credit, transformed the Barbados sugar industry, expediting the process by which integrated plantations became the dominant form of social and economic organisation on the island.

Vol. 61, No. 1 (2004), pp. 107-128. For more on the application of ideas about 'improvement' in the colonial sphere, see Richard Drayton, *Nature's Government: Science, Imperial Britain, and the 'Improvement' of the World* (New Haven, 2000).

³¹ Brenner, *Merchants and Revolution*, p. 104, 120, 140-148.

³² For Vassall, see *Complete Book of Emigrants*, p. 83. For Craddock, see Brenner, *Merchants and Revolution*, pp. 137-138. For the Noell land grant, see *Thurloe Papers*, Vol. 4., pp. 634-635, 'Instructions unto Major General Fortescue, Vice-Admiral Goodson, Major Robert Sedgwick and Daniel Serle', [n.d. c. 1656].

2. Transportation of unfree labour

During the seventeenth century all English colonies in the Americas struggled to procure labourers to clear land and cultivate tropical commodities. Access to a cheap workforce was the foundation of secure and profitable colonies. One seventeenth-century commentator considered the contributions of ‘Negro and Christian servants’ to colonial society to have been so significant that they were best described as ‘the nerves and sinews of a plantation’.³³ Finding workers was especially important for English colonisers in the first half of the seventeenth century, when the population levels of nascent colonies often determined whether speculative overseas ventures would go bust or be overrun by rival European powers. Because the small island lacked an indigenous population to subdue and enslave, the inhabitants of Barbados were forced to satisfy their labour shortages by importing unfree labourers over long distances. In the early 1640s, just before the onset of the sugar boom, planters had a steady stream of white indentured servants arriving from England, and had begun to experiment with the use of Indian slaves from Guiana and black slaves from West Africa.

The demand for labour on Barbados increased exponentially after the sugar boom began to grip the island, and as a result English merchants sought to meet this demand by obtaining warrants to transport convicts from the British Isles, and by organising expeditions to the Guinea coast to trade in enslaved Africans. It has been persuasively argued by several historians, including Carla Pestana and John Donoghue, that the revolutionary era of the 1640s was the time when coercion became the main method used by English merchants to procure unfree labourers for the American plantations, both in West Africa and the British Isles. Given the overwhelming evidence we have for parliamentary sanction of convict transportation to the colonies, the unbridled activity of ‘spirits’ in London’s waterfronts, and increased English participation in the transatlantic slave trade, it would seem they were correct. The breakdown of central political authority in England in the 1640s gave unscrupulous merchants free reign to use

³³ BL, Stowe Ms. 324, f. 6, ‘An account of the English Sugar Plantations’.

dishonest and coercive recruiting methods to procure labourers for the Barbadian market. By the 1650s, the revolutionary state had even begun to sanction these practices.³⁴

English merchants were pivotal actors in the process by which plantation labour on Barbados became racialised, as the composition of the workforce quickly shifted from white indentured labour to African slavery after 1645. The Africanisation of Barbados was evident by 1680, when enslaved Africans constituted nearly 70 percent of the island's population. There was a gendered dimension to this demographic transformation too: the switch from servitude to slavery can be more precisely described as a process by which male servants were replaced by male and female enslaved Africans.³⁵ Estimates suggest there were 50,000 enslaved Africans living on Barbados in 1700, even though merchants had transported approximately 212,000 enslaved Africans to the island since the founding of the colony: a sobering testament to how the Barbadian plantation system required a steady supply of labour to replace those who perished from rigorous work regimes and the tropical disease environment.³⁶

At first glance it would appear English merchants did not display a preference for transporting enslaved Africans over indentured servants to Barbados in the 1640s and 1650s. There was a high demand for workers in the mid-seventeenth century, and merchants sought to profit from this by shipping to the colony whatever unfree labourers they could get their hands on. There were five English merchants, for example, who I have identified as participating in both the servant and slave trade to Barbados in the era of the sugar boom.³⁷ But a closer look at the quantitative evidence is revealing. Menard's careful empirical work has shown that both the servant and slave trade to Barbados expanded during the 1640s, but the

³⁴ Pestana, *English Atlantic in an Age of Revolution*, p. 183 & 186; Donoghue, *Fire Under the Ashes*, p. 214. For Parliament's 1645 ordinance to try to prevent the 'spiriting' of children to the American plantations, see Wareing, *Indentured Migration*, pp. 179-184.

³⁵ Carole Shammas, 'Black women's work and the evolution of plantation society in Virginia', *Labor History*, Vol. 26, No. 1 (1985), pp. 5-28; Menard, *Sweet Negotiations*, pp. 47-48.

³⁶ For these estimates, derived from the Transatlantic Slave Trade Database, see Newman, *A New World of Labor*, p. 214. In 1679 Henry Drax instructed his plantation manager Richard Harwood to purchase between 10 to 15 slaves each year to replace those who had died: 'I suppose to supply the places of those that shall be deasead or Dy you will want a yearly Recrute of 10 or 15'. But, according to Drax, in times of disease that number might increase to more than 20. His preference was to buy 'Cormante or gold Cost Negros', who had 'always Stood and proved bestt in this plantation [,] theirefor you will doe welle to buy of that Nation then any other'. Thompson, 'Henry Drax's Instructions', p. 585.

³⁷ Martin Noell, Maurice Thomson, Robert Lewellin, William Pennoyer, and Thomas Parris.

‘number of slaves simply grew at a faster rate’. By the 1650s enslaved Africans ‘thoroughly dominated the unfree workforce... outnumbering servants by nearly two to one’.³⁸ My database shows how, between 1640 and 1660, there were 48 English merchants who invested in at least one slave trading voyage to Barbados. By contrast, I have only found evidence that 12 merchants organised shipments of indentured servants to Barbados over the same period (see Table A4, Appendix 2).

There are several potential explanations for this discrepancy. It is possible, for instance, slaving ventures went wrong more often than voyages carrying servants, thus increasing the frequency with which slave trading merchants deposed in cases heard at the High Court of Admiralty (a major part of my source base). The complexities and dangers associated with the transatlantic slave trade when compared to the servant trade probably also meant there were more merchants involved with a transatlantic slave trading venture, as this helped to spread the risk to invested capital. But we cannot rule out the possibility that these data reveal the preferences of English merchants: namely that they preferred shipping enslaved Africans to Barbados over white servants from around the year 1645. As I argued in Chapter Two, the reason why merchants might have favoured enslaved Africans over servants was not just due to internalised prejudices, but also material concerns. The customary status of enslaved Africans on the island as permanent and inheritable property meant that, like land on Barbados, enslaved Africans were another possession in which merchants could tie-up their money during the disruptive Civil War years of the 1640s. Perhaps just as important was that enslaved Africans were an appreciating asset, and therefore constituted a lucrative investment opportunity.

³⁸ Servant migration to Barbados saw a fourfold increase during the 1640s, and remained high until the early 1660s. Menard, *Sweet Negotiations*, pp. 35, 43-45. See also Newman, *A New World of Labor*, p. 75.

Indentured Servitude

Prior to the advent of the sugar boom, the indenture system was the main method used to bring workers to Barbados. During the 1630s, for instance, there were regular pleas for the Hay proprietors to 'send over men servants or maid servants', and to 'bind them by indenture to serve four yeares a peace'.³⁹ To encourage landless members of the English population to make the long journey to the Caribbean, plantation owners promised to cover the steep costs associated with the transatlantic voyage, and sometimes also to pay for food, clothing, and lodging. In return, these migrants would sign a contract which compelled them to enter the service of a planter upon their arrival at Barbados. The time span over which servants would be forced to work for their masters varied, but usually fell between three and ten years. In May 1649, for example, Thomas Hutchin entered the service of the Barbados planter Archibald Hay for the term of five years. As the new master of Thomas Hutchin, Hay was contractually obliged 'to pay for his passing and to finde and allow him meate, drink, apparel and lodging with other necessaries during the said terme'.⁴⁰ Indentured servants had always been treated like commodities by merchants and planters on Barbados. But historians usually make the distinction that it was the indenture contracts which were being bought and sold: in particular the time which the servant in question had left before the completion of their service. A servant with four years left to serve was more valuable than a servant who had just one year until securing their freedom.⁴¹ Nonetheless, the unequal power relations between masters and servants on Barbados were radically different to traditional forms of apprenticeship in England. Barbadian labour management practices, referred to as the 'custom of the country', were codified in 1661 under the 'Act for the Good Governing of Servants'.⁴²

The commodification and exploitation of labourers from the British Isles took a new turn during the Interregnum. The period from 1642 to 1660 saw rising demand for labourers due to the expansion of the

³⁹ NRS, Hay Papers, GD34/924/9, Letter from Peter Hay, 2 October 1637.

⁴⁰ NRS, Hay Papers, GD34/949/1, Indenture of Thomas Hutchin, 16 May 1649.

⁴¹ This can be demonstrated by comparing the value of two servants listed in the 1640 inventory of the Rendezvous plantation, owned by Lancelot Pace. The labourer John Robinson, who had 9 months left to serve, was deemed to be worth only 80 lb. of cotton, while Edward Spurloe was appraised at 700 lb. of cotton due to the 6 years he had left on his contract. BDA, RB3/1, pp. 13-15.

⁴² Newman, *A New World of Labor*, p. 68, 94-95.

sugar industry, and merchants were given permission to meet this demand by forcefully transporting political prisoners, vagrants, and other 'undesirable' elements of the English population to the American plantations (especially Barbados). Following the siege of Colchester in the summer of 1648, for example, 18 prisoners of war were taken by the New Model Army under the command of Sir Thomas Fairfax, and subsequently given to Richard Arnold to 'become his servant[s] and to be for that purpose transported to the Barbadoes'. Similarly, in October 1654, the Council of State ordered that 'English, Scotch, or Irish pirates, prisoners in Dorchester gaol' were to be 'forthwith sent to Barbadoes, Bermudas, or some other of the English plantations in America'.⁴³ Martin Noell used his appointments to various Parliamentary committees, especially those relating to poor relief and colonial proceedings, to deliver regular shipments of servants, vagrants, and captive prisoners to his sugar plantations on Barbados.⁴⁴ The Lord Protector granted Noell multiple warrants to transport to Barbados a large number of men and women who were imprisoned in England.⁴⁵ Other merchants with vested interests in Barbados sugar plantations also profited from the trade in convicts. In May 1654, Thomas Parris was permitted to transport 500 Scottish prisoners to Barbados. Two months later Thomas Kendall, the business partner of the planter Thomas Modyford, was given a warrant to ship a further 300 of these incarcerated Scotsmen to the island.⁴⁶ After the conquest of Ireland in the early 1650s, Catholic Irishmen made up an increasingly large proportion of the indentured workforce on Barbados, which has led Hilary Beckles to suggest that there may have been an ethnic and religious dimension to the maltreatment of servants.⁴⁷

Insights into the lived experience of forced labourers, and by extension the human impact of the policies instituted by powerful merchants such as Martin Noell, are difficult to recapture. The surviving source material provides historians with detailed information about the business activities and political offices held by merchants and planters, but does not usually record the voices of enslaved Africans and

⁴³ LMA, MCD Box 2, CLA/024/06/002; *CSPC AWI*, Vol. 1., pp. 418-419, 19 October 1654.

⁴⁴ Donoghue, *Fire Under the Ashes*, pp. 214-216. For further information on the increased supply of vagrant and convict labour to the American colonies during the Interregnum, see Swingen, *Competing Visions of Empire*, pp. 20-28; Newman, *A New World of Labor*, pp. 76-79.

⁴⁵ *CSPC AWI*, Vol. 1., pp. 421-423 & pp. 427-428, 1 March 1655, 30 March 1655, 14 August 1655.

⁴⁶ Bodleian Library, MS Rawl A. 328, f. 46 & f. 92.

⁴⁷ Hilary McD Beckles, 'A "riotous and unruly lot": Irish Indentured Servants and Freemen in the English West Indies, 1644-1713', *The William and Mary Quarterly*, Vol. 47, No. 4 (1990), pp. 503-522; Newman, *A New World of Labor*, pp. 81-83.

indentured servants. Nevertheless, there are some written sources, including printed petitions from indentured servants pleading for redress from their ordeal on Barbados, which give an impression of what it was like to labour on a tropical sugar plantation in the mid-seventeenth century. A well-known example is the pamphlet *Englands Slavery, or Barbados Merchandize*, which details the experiences of Marcellus Rivers and Oxenbridge Foyle, two members of the English gentry who were transported to Barbados as servants in the 1650s.⁴⁸ According to their account, Rivers and Foyle became prisoners of the revolutionary state in 1654 after they were unfortunate enough to be in the proximity of a Royalist uprising near Salisbury. They were incarcerated in Devon for around a year before being ‘snacht out of their prisons...and so hurried to Plymouth aboard the ship, *John* of London’. Alongside 79 other captives, Rivers and Foyle were forced to endure a torturous five-week journey, during which the ‘captive petitioners’ were ‘kept under decks (and guards) among horses’. When they arrived on Barbados, the convicts were sold at a rate of 1550 lb. of sugar per servant.⁴⁹

The prisoners, including Rivers and Foyle, were sold as the ‘goods and chattels’ of three English merchants working in partnership in this venture: Martin Noell, Thomas Alderne, and Henry Hatsell. A hitherto unknown letter from these merchants to John Cole, captain of the *John*, was produced as evidence during litigation in the Mayor’s Court of London in 1661. It reveals how Noell and his co-partners instructed Cole to sell the servants ‘at the best rate you can, for ready Comodities, their time according to the Custome of the Island’.⁵⁰ Rivers and Foyle interpreted events differently. In their pamphlet, they condemned these ‘merchants that deal in slaves and souls of men’ for ignoring the social structures which stratified early modern England. As individuals who had enjoyed a privileged upbringing in England, Rivers and Foyle were shocked when confronted with the values and habits held by planters on Barbados and merchants such as Martin Noell, who spared neither ‘Divines, nor Officers, nor

⁴⁸ Marcellus Rivers and Oxenbridge Foyle, *Englands slavery, or Barbados merchandize; represented in a petition to the high court of Parliament, by Marcellus Rivers and Oxenbridge Foyle gentlemen, on behalf of themselves and three-score and ten more free-born Englishmen sold (uncondemned) into slavery: together with letters written to some honourable members of Parliament* (London, 1659). The Monmouth rebel, Henry Pitman, wrote a similar pamphlet in the 1680s about his experiences of forced transportation and labour on Barbados. Henry Pitman, *A relation of the great sufferings and strange adventures of Henry Pitman, chyrurgion to the late Duke of Monmouth* (London, 1689).

⁴⁹ Rivers and Foyle, *Englands slavery, or Barbados merchandize*, pp. 2-6; LMA, MCD Box 12, CLA/024/06/012.

⁵⁰ LMA, MCD Box 12, CLA/024/06/012.

Gentleman, nor any age or condition of men' from an 'insupportable captivity'. On Barbados, labourers endured a daily routine of exhausting manual work, such as 'grinding at the mills, attending the furnaces, or digging in this scorching island', regardless of their class or age.⁵¹

In the spring of 1659 several petitions detailing the grievances of servants sent from the British Isles to labour on Barbadian plantations were debated in the House of Commons.⁵² The Parliamentary hearings over the complaints of Marcellus Rivers and Oxenbridge Foyle give historians a rare glimpse into how some powerful and wealthy members of English society viewed indentured servitude and slavery in the mid-seventeenth century. During the proceedings there was protracted and heated discussion of the case of Rivers and Foyle, especially their assertion that Martin Noell had sold Englishmen into 'slavery'. As an MP, Noell was able to respond to their claims in person. He began by detailing how he regularly acted as an agent for other merchants, who 'send to me to procure such artificers to be sent over [to Barbados] as I might think fit for them', and that he sourced some of these persons 'out of Brideswell and other prisons'. He then, somewhat insincerely, proceeded to insist that he had sent none of the prisoners to the Caribbean without first having them sign an indenture and give their consent. Although Noell admitted that the work regimes on Barbados were hard, he claimed that servants on the island were all 'civilly used'. Indeed, he suggested that because servants in the Caribbean only laboured from six in the morning to six in the evening, that the intensity of work on Barbados was not so different to 'the common husbandman' in England. And besides, the hardest work was 'mostly carried on by the negroes'.⁵³ Although some MPs sitting in the House of Commons assumed that this pamphlet was written to undermine the parliamentary regime, and therefore rejected any criticism of London merchants involved in the servant trade as a mere 'Cavalier's petition', there were a few dissenting voices who were rightly more sceptical of Noell's defense. Sir Henry Vane, for instance, exclaimed that he did not 'look upon this business as a Cavalierish business: but as a matter that concerns the liberty of the free-born people of England'.⁵⁴ After the Restoration matters remained unresolved. A deposition from 1661 was recorded in the Mayor's Court of London by

⁵¹ Rivers and Foyle, *Englands slavery, or Barbados merchandize*, pp. 2-6.

⁵² *Proceedings and Debates*, pp. 247-263.

⁵³ *Ibid.*, p. 250.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 251, 252 & 256.

Marcellus Rivers on behalf of himself and the other prisoners transported against their wills to Barbados in 1655, in which they recounted their experiences on Barbados and demanded compensation. I have not been able to ascertain whether they received any compensation from Noell, but future research in the records of the Lord Mayor's Court may help to reconstruct this court case in full.⁵⁵

Historians such as Hilary Beckles, John Donoghue, and Simon Newman have argued that the cruel treatment of indentured servants on Barbados rendered them effectively 'white slaves' or 'bond slaves'.⁵⁶ Servants were, however, accorded rights which made their servile status on Barbados distinct from enslaved Africans. As has already been mentioned, servants were obliged to work for their masters because they had signed a written contract of indenture, which stipulated that they would be freed after a fixed time, usually five to seven years. Some servants were forcefully transported to the Caribbean after falling victim to the exploitative actions of 'spirits' operating in the squalid waterfronts of English port-towns, especially during the 1640s and 1650s, although the surviving evidence indicates that this was the exception rather than the rule during the entire span of the seventeenth century. Once their contracts had expired, ex-servants were accorded the status of freeman on Barbados, and could purchase land and unfree labourers of their own. They were permitted to 'employ their times according to their abilities, and capacities, either to get a small Plantation, or to work at day-labour in other Plantations, or else to exercise their Trades, if so capacitated.'⁵⁷ Enslaved Africans living on Barbados were, by contrast, afforded no such opportunities. They were subject to greater controls and more brutal punishments. As Richard Blome stated in 1678: 'The Negro Slaves are never out of their Bondage and the Children they get, are likewise perpetual slaves'.⁵⁸

⁵⁵ LMA, MCD Box 12, CLA/024/06/012.

⁵⁶ Hilary McD. Beckles, 'Plantation Production and White "Proto-Slavery": White Indentured Servants and the Colonization of the English West Indies, 1624–1645', *The Americas*, Vol. 41 (1985), pp. 21-45; Donoghue, 'Out of the Land of Bondage'; Newman, *A New World of Labor*, ch. 4 & p. 246. The characterization of indentured servants as 'white slaves' has generated criticism in recent years. E.g. Jerome S. Handler & Matthew C. Reilly, 'Contesting "White Slavery" in the Caribbean: Enslaved Africans and European Indentured Servants in Seventeenth-Century Barbados', *New West Indian Guide*, Vol. 91 (2017), pp. 30–55.

⁵⁷ Richard Blome, *A Description of the Island of Jamaica; With the other Isles and Territories in America, to which the English are related, viz. Barbadoes, St Christophers, Niervis, Antego, St Vincent, Dominica, Montserat, Anguilla, Barbada, Bermudes, Carolina, Virginia, Maryland, New York, New England, NewFoundland. Together with the Present State of Algiers* (London, 1678), pp. 36-37.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 36-37.

African Slavery

Debate over the origins of slavery in Anglo-America has produced a richly detailed body of interdisciplinary scholarship.⁵⁹ Some scholars contend that the concept of race was an ideological catalyst for the emergence of African slavery in the Americas. Others have approached the topic from a materialist standpoint, arguing that the exploitation of enslaved Africans was a rational economic choice for English merchants and planters, and that entrenched racial prejudices developed over time as a by-product of this decision.⁶⁰ Barbados has played a central role in these discussions, because this was the English colony where African slavery first became a large-scale institution.

Recent work has helped historians to explain how and why men and women from West Africa were reduced to permanent and inheritable slavery by colonists in early America. Jerome S. Handler contends that the very first Africans who came to Barbados after being taken as a prize by the party who founded the colony in 1627, were seen as ‘slaves’ in the eyes of those Englishmen.⁶¹ Due to their familiarity with slavery in the Iberian world and their belief in the inferiority of Africans, English colonisers in the early seventeenth century believed that ‘enslaving Africans was socially acceptable’.⁶² Even though there was no

⁵⁹ For the scholarship which inspired the ‘origins debate’, see Oscar & Mary Handlin, ‘Origins of the Southern Labor System’, *William and Mary Quarterly*, Vol. 7 (1950); Winthrop D. Jordan, *White over Black, American Attitudes Toward the Negro, 1550–1812* (Chapel Hill, 1968); Edmund S. Morgan, *American Slavery, American Freedom: The Ordeal of Colonial Virginia* (New York, 1975); William M. Wiecek, ‘The Statutory Law of Slavery and Race in the Thirteen Mainland Colonies of British America’, *William and Mary Quarterly*, Vol. 34, No. 2 (1977), pp. 258–280.

⁶⁰ For more recent treatments of the ‘origins debate’, see Blackburn, *The Making of New World Slavery*; Betty Wood, *The Origins of American Slavery: Freedom and Bondage in the English Colonies* (New York, 1997); Eltis, *The Rise of African Slavery*; April Lee Hatfield, ‘A “Very Wary People in Their Bargaining” or “Very Good Marchandise”: English Traders’ Views of Free and Enslaved Africans, 1550–1650’, *Slavery & Abolition*, Vol. 25 (2004); John C. Coombs, ‘Beyond the “Origins Debate”: Rethinking the Rise of Virginia Slavery’, in Douglas Bradburn and John C. Coombs, eds, *Early Modern Virginia: Reconsidering the Old Dominion* (Charlottesville, 2011), pp. 239–278.

⁶¹ Jerome S. Handler, ‘Custom and law: The status of enslaved Africans in seventeenth-century Barbados’, *Slavery and Abolition*, Vol. 37, No. 2, (2016).

⁶² *Ibid.*

⁶² *Ibid.*, p. 236. Michael Guasco has made a similar argument, emphasising how educated early modern Englishmen were familiar with slavery because they had read the Bible, classical works, and travel literature. This gave them a comprehensive understanding of slavery in the classical world, galley slavery in the Mediterranean, and Iberian slaveholding practices. See Guasco, *Slaves and Englishmen*, ch. 2, 3, 4.

written precedent for slavery in English law and the Barbados slave codes were not formalised until 1661,⁶³ Handler provides documentary evidence to show that certain social practices on Barbados, especially those involving conduct towards Africans, were developed through custom. The slave status ascribed to Africans on Barbados meant that from the very beginning of English settlement on the island they were treated as chattel property and endured a lifetime of servitude. Another feature of slave status involved the stipulation that black mothers always passed on their inferior position in society to their children.⁶⁴ There is considerable evidence to support the argument that these practices were common on Barbados long before they were enshrined in law. Richard Ligon explained how ‘the slaves and their posterity’ were ‘subject to their Masters for ever’.⁶⁵ By treating Africans as human merchandise, that could be bought on the Guinea coast and sold to planters on Barbados, London merchants played a crucial role in reinforcing the status of Africans as private property.

Building on Handler’s work, I seek to provide a more detailed analysis of the early English slave trade to Barbados. Historians originally presumed that the Dutch, who dominated European commerce with West Africa and controlled the Caribbean carrying trade in the early seventeenth century, provided the inhabitants of Barbados with most of their enslaved Africans in the 1640s and 1650s.⁶⁶ This was because some contemporary accounts described the Dutch as major participants in the slave trade to Barbados. For instance, Sir Robert Harley, who was appointed Keeper of the Seal of Barbados in 1663, explained how ‘the Dutch being ingaged on the coast of Giney in Affrick for negros Slaves having lost brasille, not knowing where to vent them they trusted them to Barbadoes’. Harman Barrentz, captain of the *Peace* of Amsterdam, is a good example of one of these Dutch merchants who sold enslaved Africans on

⁶³ For the Barbados slave codes, see Edward B. Rugemer, ‘The Development of Mastery and Race in Comprehensive Slave Codes of the Greater Caribbean during the Seventeenth Century’, *The William and Mary Quarterly*, Vol. 70, No. 3 (2013), pp. 429-458.

⁶⁴ Handler, ‘Custom and law’, p. 234. There was a purported ruling made by Governor Henry Hawley and the Barbados Council in 1636 which stated how ‘Negroes and Indians that came here to be sold, should serve for Life, unless a Contract was before made to the contrary’. Handler has raised doubts over the veracity of this quotation, however, by demonstrating that the provenance of the source material is uncertain and arguing that therefore the ruling may not have even existed. See Handler, ‘Custom and law’, p. 243-244.

⁶⁵ Ligon, *True and Exact History*, p. 93.

⁶⁶ E.g. Dunn, *Sugar and Slaves*, pp. 65-66 & 230-231; Sheridan, *Sugar and Slavery*, p. 130; Puckrein, *Little England*, p. 71.

Barbados in the mid-seventeenth century. In February 1655, his vessel was captured by an English warship near Carlisle Bay with '240 negroes' on board.⁶⁷

More recently, however, a body of research has accumulated which has helped to overturn what John Appleby called the 'accepted view that the English slave trade was of "small proportions" before 1660'.⁶⁸ Even historians of the Dutch Atlantic have observed that there is little evidence of extensive Dutch involvement in the slave trade to Barbados during the 1640s: there are just three such voyages documented for the mid-1640s, for instance.⁶⁹ The West India Company possessed monopoly rights over the Dutch slave trade, and in the crucial early years of the Barbadian sugar industry the company struggled to supply even its own colony of Brazil with an adequate number of enslaved Africans.⁷⁰ Calculations made using the surviving evidence for the slave trade to Barbados suggest that the Dutch imported just 13 percent of enslaved Africans recorded between 1641 and 1660.⁷¹ As Wim Klooster has recently observed: 'the English slave trade to Barbados must have been more significant than most historians have realised'.⁷²

It was Englishmen operating out of London, Bristol, the Caribbean colonies, and New England who organised regular trading ventures to the West African coast in search of slaves for the Barbadian plantation system between 1640 and 1660. There are 17 slave voyages to Barbados under the English flag recorded in the Transatlantic Slave Trade Database for the 1640s.⁷³ By conducting research in the High Court of Admiralty papers and the Mayor's Court Depositions, archives which historians of early America tend not to consult, I have found evidence of 35 English slave trading ventures to Barbados in the 1640s,

⁶⁷ BL, Add. Ms. 70063, ff. 10-12, 'Toucheing Barbados', [n.d.]; TNA, CO 1/66, f. 33.

⁶⁸ John C. Appleby, "'A business of much difficulty": A London Slaving Voyage, 1651-1654', *Mariner's Mirror*, Vol. 81 (1995), pp. 4-7. Besides Appleby's article, several other pieces of research have made important contributions to our understanding of the early English slave trade: Larry Gragg, "'To procure Negroes": The English slave trade to Barbados, 1627-60', *Slavery and Abolition*, Vol. 16, No. 1, (1995), pp. 65-84; Menard, *Sweet Negotiations*, ch. 2 & 3; Blakemore, 'West Africa in the British Atlantic'; Roper, *Advancing Empire*, ch. 3.

⁶⁹ Boogaart and Emmer, 'The Dutch Participation in the Atlantic Slave Trade, 1596-1650'; Koot, *Empire at the Periphery*, pp. 57-58; Klooster, *The Dutch Moment*, pp. 168-169.

⁷⁰ Klooster, *The Dutch Moment*, p. 168.

⁷¹ Koot, *Empire at the Periphery*, pp. 57-58.

⁷² Klooster, *The Dutch Moment*, p. 169.

⁷³ www.slavevoyages.org (Accessed 30/09/2019).

doubling the number of known slaving voyages dispatched by English merchants to the island in that decade (see Table 3.3., below). This enriches our understanding of the dimensions of early English slave trading, as it was during the 1640s that English participation in the transatlantic slave trade first began to intensify, and most of this traffic was directed towards Barbados. It also provides tangible evidence for what many historians have begun to suspect: that the English slave trade to Barbados was more important than that driven by the Dutch in the 1640s, and that it was English merchants who were responsible for providing planters with the unfree labour necessary to precipitate the sugar boom.

Table 3.3 [Redacted]

A closer look at the data in Table 3.3 provides several insights. The importance of London to the early English slave trade is evident, as the overwhelming majority of slaving ventures to Barbados in the 1640s began there. There were 86 unique English merchants who invested in slave trading ventures to Barbados in the 1640s. 14 of these merchants financed two or more voyages, and we can therefore identify them as the most important English slave traders in the 1640s: Peter Andrews, Richard Batson, Jeremy Blackman, Benjamin Cranley, Richard Cranley, William Fletcher, Richard Hill, Richard Parr, William Pennoyer, Maurice Thomson, Samuel Vassall, John Wadloe, Rowland Wilson Sen., and John Wood. Most of these merchants had prior involvement in West African commerce and the American tobacco trade during the 1630s. The database also supports what other scholars have gleaned from demographic data on Barbados, namely that deliveries of enslaved Africans into Barbados began to increase sharply after 1645. I have found evidence of two English slave trading voyages to Barbados in 1644, and eight in 1645, which suggests that inputs of enslaved Africans into Barbados may have seen as much as a fourfold increase in the space of a year. The demand for unfree labour generated by the emergence of a commercial sugar industry on the island in 1643 clearly provided a significant stimulus to slave trading traffic, which began to have an impact that is noticeable in the historical record several years later.

Due to the type of source material used to create this database there are some limitations to the conclusions we can draw from Table 3.3. The High Court of Admiralty dealt with legal cases between merchants, and as such is by its very nature a record of trading ventures which went awry. This means that while all of the ventures listed in Table 3.3 had a charterparty which specified they were to voyage to the West African coast before then proceeding to Barbados, a proportion of these journeys were never completed. The voyage of the *Phillip* in 1646, which ran aground in the Caribbean with its cargo of enslaved Africans while en route to Barbados, is a good example. Consequently, we cannot make reliable approximations about the true volume of slave trading to Barbados in the 1640s. What the data in Table 3.3 does provide us with is a sense of the scale of English slaving voyages to Barbados in this decade when compared to other nations, such as the Dutch. Estimates drawn from Table 3.3 about the number of enslaved Africans imported into Barbados in the 1640s also have a high margin of error. Around half of the slave trading voyages listed in Table 3.3 do not have information about the number of enslaved

Africans transported to Barbados, only that ‘divers negroes’ were disembarked at the colony. But if we were to fill in the gaps, and use the imputed data of 188 slaves disembarked for an average slave trading voyage in this period, then the database would show that approximately 6522 enslaved Africans reached Barbados in the 1640s.⁷⁴ But this is, of course, an estimate made only from *recorded* slave trading voyages to Barbados: the fragmentary historical record for early English slave trading means it is highly likely that the number of enslaved Africans actually imported in this decade was much higher, and approaches Menard’s estimate of 18,000.⁷⁵

How were English merchants able to rapidly expand their participation in the transatlantic slave trade in the mid-1640s? Englishmen had been exposed to Atlantic slavery since the sixteenth century, when Elizabethan privateers had captured Portuguese and Spanish vessels carrying enslaved Africans to the New World.⁷⁶ But despite this familiarity, organising a successful slave trading venture was still a complex undertaking. The logistical difficulties associated with carrying an unruly human cargo on a journey across the Atlantic, and then generating a profit from their sale in the Caribbean, should not be underestimated. Reliable mercantile contacts were necessary for Englishmen to conduct cross-cultural exchange in West Africa. It took time, and repeated visits to the Guinea coast, for the trust necessary for successful business relationships to develop.

Once they had purchased a consignment of enslaved Africans, which sometimes numbered in the hundreds, English merchants and mariners were then required to keep their human cargo alive during the transatlantic voyage, while at the same time making sure the enslaved Africans were kept in a subjugated condition by restraining them with shackles and making liberal use of the whip.⁷⁷ The horrific conditions endured by enslaved Africans during the Middle Passage exemplifies the devastating human cost associated with the profiteering of English merchants who traded to West Africa and Barbados in the era of the sugar boom. The demand for labour in the Caribbean colonies was high even before the transition

⁷⁴ The imputed data of 188 slaves is part of the algorithm used in the Transatlantic Slave Trade Database, www.slavevoyages.org (Accessed 30/09/2019).

⁷⁵ Menard, *Sweet Negotiations*, p. 47.

⁷⁶ Guasco, *Slaves and Englishmen*, pp. 7-8.

⁷⁷ For more on some of these difficulties, see Appleby, ‘A business of much difficulty’.

to sugar, always surpassing the supply of servants coming from the British Isles. Therefore, it must not have been until the mid-seventeenth century that Englishmen possessed the knowledge and experience necessary to make large-scale slave trading voyages a viable commercial undertaking. The large number of merchants involved in slave trading ventures to Barbados during the 1640s suggests that, despite this accumulation of experience, the dangers associated with slaving voyages and the amounts of capital tied-up in these ventures were still significant, and that a large pool of investors was required to spread the risk (see Table 3.3, above).

The triangular trade within the British Empire, which brought enslaved Africans to the Caribbean and tropical goods such as sugar back to England for nearly two centuries, developed from English trade to West Africa for gold and ivory in the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries. English commercial activity on the West African coast was formalised with the creation of the Guinea Company in 1618. The London merchants who received the legal patent from Charles I to trade with West Africa after the company's reincorporation in 1631 were Sir Nicholas Crispe, Humphrey Slaney, John Wood, and William Cloberry.⁷⁸ It was alluring commodities, especially gold, ivory, redwood, wax, and hides (but not enslaved Africans) which first attracted Englishmen to trade along the Guinea coast. Interloping merchants did seek to break the Guinea Company's monopoly and consign cargoes of enslaved Africans to markets across the Atlantic. In 1626, for example, Maurice Thomson dispatched 'about sixty slaves' to his plantation on St. Christopher, in what constitutes the first recorded English slave trading venture to an English colony.⁷⁹ While in 1637 the Guinea Company submitted a formal complaint about how the interloper John Crispe had outfitted the *Talbot* 'to trade upon the Coasts of Guinea, and to take Nigers, and to carry them to other forraigne ptes'.⁸⁰

The business relationships the Guinea Company forged with indigenous merchants in West Africa when conducting their gold and ivory trade in the 1620s and 1630s were fundamental to the expansion of

⁷⁸ Brenner, *Merchants and Revolution*, pp. 163-164. For further information on these traders see, Porter, 'The Crispe Family'.

⁷⁹ Quoted in Roper, *Advancing Empire*, p. 33.

⁸⁰ TNA, CO 1/9, f. 169.

English participation in the transatlantic slave trade in the 1640s. This is because it was London merchants working under the remit of the Guinea Company who pioneered English involvement in the transatlantic slave trade to Barbados. The first cargo of enslaved Africans that is recorded to have been sold in the colony was transported on a vessel belonging to members of the Guinea Company. In 1641 the *Star* of London, a ship owned by Sir Nicholas Crispe, Samuel Crispe, and John Wood, arrived at Barbados with a consignment of ‘divers negroes’.⁸¹ Guinea Company merchants who had organised voyages to West Africa to transport slaves to Barbados, along with gold and ivory to England, continued to trade in enslaved Africans on their own accounts after the company was stripped of its monopoly by Parliament in the mid-1640s. John Wood, for example, was part-owner of the *Merchant Frigott* and her pinnace the *Speedwell*, which ventured to the Jambo River in modern-day Ghana in the early 1650s, before journeying to Barbados and Santa Cruz.⁸²

We cannot be certain how the Guinea Company first became aware of the high demand for labour on Barbados, but it probably relates to the fact that voyages to West Africa often stopped at Barbados on the homeward bound journey for refreshment. Prevailing winds and ocean currents run clockwise in the Atlantic, meaning that the quickest way to sail back to Europe from West Africa in the early modern period was via the eastern Caribbean. Therefore, English ships trading in West Africa often made stops at Barbados to resupply before returning to Europe. One example is the voyage of the *Darnell* in 1661. The vessel journeyed to the Gold Coast, where the crew traded for ‘82 Negroes, a parcell of Elephants Teeth, and some Gold’. The charterparty specified that the ship’s captain should go ‘from Guinny, to the Barbadoes there to have refreshed his Negroes and soe to have gone to Cadiz in Spaine, there to have sould them’.⁸³ It may have been in this way that London merchants trading under the remit of the Guinea Company first became aware of the high demand for labour on Barbados in the 1630s, and therefore began transporting enslaved Africans to the island in the early 1640s.

⁸¹ BDA, RB3/1, pp. 202-203.

⁸² LMA, MCD Box 4, CLA/024/06/004.

⁸³ Donnan, *Documents Illustrative of the Slave Trade*, Document 38, pp. 154-156.

Historians have tended to assume that, after 1640, all voyages to Barbados via West Africa were primarily slave trading ventures. But a careful reading of the available source material reveals that this was not always the case, particularly in the period before the incorporation of Royal African Company in 1672. Even after the 1640s, when the demand for enslaved Africans in colonial markets exploded, the trade in gold, ivory, and redwood remained important for Englishmen trading to West Africa. When English vessels en-route to Barbados chose to trade in West Africa, slaves were often only part of the merchandise they bought. In the early period of English participation in the slave trade, valuable commodities such as gold and ivory were transported across the Atlantic to Barbados alongside human cargo. The enslaved Africans were usually sold at English colonies in the Caribbean in exchange for sugar and other tropical goods, but the gold and ivory remained stored in the hold and were brought back to Europe.

One example is the voyage of the *Seville Society*, a vessel owned by Samuel Wilson and Company, which departed London for Guinea in February 1649. In West Africa the merchants picked up a cargo of ‘250 negers and about 3000 lbs of elephants teeth’. The vessel stopped at Barbados, Nevis, and Curacao, but being unable to find a good market, eventually sold the enslaved Africans at Guaranaro on the northern coast of Venezuela in early June 1650. The ivory was stored below deck while the vessel stopped at various islands in the Spanish Caribbean to trade for other commodities, including salt, tobacco, and hides. The *Seville Society* was seized by a marauding French warship before these goods could be returned to England, leading to litigation in the Mayor’s Court of London. A similar case is that of the *Eagle*, part-owned by Richard Batson, which took in ‘a great quantity of Gold upon the Gold coasts of Guiney’ along with a cargo of ‘140 Negroes’, before leaving for Barbados in August 1650.⁸⁴ Even in 1652, when the ‘Adventurers for Guinny’ petitioned the Council of State for increased protection from Dutch aggression against their vessels, the merchants highlighted the importance of their trade in ‘Gold, hides, wax,

⁸⁴ For the *Seville Society*, see LMA, MCD, Box 4. For the *Eagle*, see TNA, HCA 13/65, ff. 45-46.

Elephants teeth, Redwood, Guinny graine', but neglected to mention the slave trade to the Caribbean colonies.⁸⁵

Between the 27 July and 17 August 1644, Captain George Richardson, in partnership with the merchants Richard Parr and John Parris, of the *Marie Bonadventure* sold 251 enslaved Africans on Barbados. Around six months later the *Mary* of London, owned by the merchant John Wadloe, carried a smaller cargo of 26 enslaved Africans to Barbados.⁸⁶ Source material relating to these slave trading ventures has survived at the Barbados Department of Archives, providing historians with unprecedented amounts of detail about the methods English merchants used to sell enslaved Africans in the early stages of the sugar boom. Slave traders would probably have preferred to receive pounds sterling in exchange for their merchandise, but due to the limited availability of specie on Barbados, also accepted the equivalent value in tropical commodities or property on the island. Known to Englishmen in the seventeenth century as a transaction involving 'ready goods', 33 enslaved Africans from the *Marie Bonadventure* (or 13% of the total number sold) were bought in exchange for a set quantity of tobacco, cotton, indigo, or pork. A Barbados planter named Lawrence Price, for example, bought 'three negroes sold at 2500 lbs of tobacco per head' from the slave traders. Other commodities were more valuable and had greater purchasing power on Barbados. This is demonstrated by the transaction involving George Nore and his business partner, who by comparison paid just 200 lb. of indigo for two enslaved Africans.⁸⁷

Because slave labourers were an expensive investment it was typical for merchants to extend credit to Barbadians to help them afford to purchase enslaved Africans. A bill of exchange was written up by the representatives of the two parties, often in the presence of several witnesses. This written agreement detailed the value of the enslaved Africans sold in either pound sterling or equivalent commodities, the time over which repayment would occur, and identified a source of security (usually landed property or forced labourers already owned by the buyer) to act as collateral in case the planter was unable to repay

⁸⁵ TNA, CO 1/11, f. 186. The signatories of this petition were Samuel Vassall, William Pennoyer, John Wood, George Brett, Thomas Walter, and Nathaniel Andrewes.

⁸⁶ BDA, RB 3/1, pp. 419-422, 436-439, 589-594.

⁸⁷ *Ibid.*; Menard, *Sweet Negotiations*, p. 63, Table 12.

the merchant on schedule. All the enslaved Africans transported on the *Mary* were sold on credit, while 211 enslaved Africans from the *Marie Bonaventure* (or 84% of the total number sold) were purchased using credit.⁸⁸ The richest and most well-connected inhabitants of Barbados stored a proportion of their money with goldsmith-bankers or scriveners in the City London. In some cases, therefore, bills of exchange entitled the bearer to draw pounds sterling from the London accounts of Barbados planters in exchange for an advanced supply of enslaved Africans. Christopher Thompson, for instance, bought ten enslaved Africans by promising to draw three bills of exchange totalling £220 ‘upon his brother Stephen Thompson of London’, which was payable to ‘alderman William Ashwell of London’ eight months after the date the bill was signed.⁸⁹

It was most common, however, for those on Barbados who bought enslaved Africans using credit to promise to deliver a fixed quantity of tropical commodities to a coastal storehouse at an arranged time in the near future. In the case of the enslaved Africans sold by the *Marie Bonaventure*, this date was the last day in April 1645, or just after the next harvest in nine months’ time. A good example of this form of transaction involved the Barbados-based merchant Edward Pye, who received ‘12 negroes’ after promising to deliver 12,000 lb. of tobacco and 12,000 lb. of cotton to a storehouse owned by Richardson and Parr before the 31 April 1645.⁹⁰ Other planters settled their debts to slave traders by agreeing to freight a proportion of their next crop to England under the merchant’s account. They sometimes facilitated this deal by paying the administrative freight costs associated with shipping too. James Drax, who bought 35 enslaved Africans in August 1644 for £726 BMC, the largest consignment sold by the owners of the *Marie Bonaventure*, repaid his debt by promising to ship to England ‘soe much suger or other merchantable commodities as shall amount to the value of the said some of 726 sterling’ under the account of Richardson and Parr.⁹¹ Most bills of exchange clearly stipulated that the commodities provided for must be ‘merchantable’, or of adequate quality to fetch a good price on the London market. Merchants demanded that the tobacco they received was ‘well made up in role’, that cotton was ‘well

⁸⁸ Menard, *Sweet Negotiations*, pp. 63-64, Table 12 & Table 13.

⁸⁹ BDA, RB 3/1, pp. 419-422, 436-439, 589-594.

⁹⁰ *Ibid.*

⁹¹ *Ibid.*

cleared from the seeds', and that sugars were 'well cured'.⁹² Disputes over the quality and weight of the commodities sold by planters to merchants caused new regulations to be drafted in 1650. The Barbados assembly highlighted how there had previously been no provisions made to ensure that the 'severall Comodities of this Island given and received in payment, that is to say Cotton wooll, Sugar, Indicoe, and Tobacco, should be of such goodness as the same ought to be'. Because they feared that this would lead to 'the greate discouragement of all as well Marchants and others trayding in and to this Island', the legislators nominated several men in each parish to deliver an impartial judgement when differences of opinion arose between merchants and planters over the quality and relative value of tropical goods.⁹³

This section has argued that English merchants were the most important suppliers of indentured servants and enslaved Africans to Barbados in the 1640s and 1650s. By using new source material to create a database of every known English slave trading voyage to Barbados in the 1640s, I have deepened historical understanding of early English involvement in the transatlantic slave trade. Credit arrangements between merchants in the City of London and planters on Barbados were central to the operation of the slave trade in the 1640s and 1650s, and without these written agreements to delay repayments, it is probable that only the wealthiest planters could have afforded to purchase enslaved Africans. By extending credit to planters to enable them to buy slave labourers, London merchants played a crucial role in rapidly increasing the population of enslaved Africans on Barbados. This expedited the Africanisation of the island's population, facilitating the emergence of the first slave society in the English-speaking world.

⁹² For tobacco and cotton, see BDA, RB3/1, pp. 419-422, 436-439, 589-594. For sugar, see BDA, RB3/3, p. 628.

⁹³ TNA, CO1/11, f. 37, 'An Act for the better Encouragement of trade', 9 August 1650.

3. The provisioning trade

As they purchased land on the island and populated burgeoning plantations with ever increasing numbers of indentured servants and enslaved Africans (most of whom were sold on credit), merchants in the City of London helped to create a new and dynamic consumer market in the Caribbean. But the sugar boom also precipitated an ecological catastrophe on Barbados. Intensive farming techniques damaged soil fertility and drastically reduced species richness as flora and fauna succumbed to the destruction of their natural habitats.⁹⁴ As a small tropical island with limited natural resources, sustaining a large population on Barbados had always been precarious. When woodlands and provision grounds began to be rapidly converted into sugar plantations in the mid-seventeenth century, however, the inhabitants of Barbados were forced to look overseas for their fuel and staple foods more than ever before. Planters became almost wholly dependent on merchants for imports of lumber, food, clothes, tools, horses, oxen, cattle, and asses if they were to keep their sugar mills turning. One merchant captured this commercial relationship perfectly when he wrote that ‘without relieve from England the Island of Barbados, a plantation belonging to England, is not able to subsist’.⁹⁵

There were 97 English merchants who participated in the Barbados provisioning trade during the 1640s and 1650s. Of this number, 21 also owned land on the island, and were therefore probably concerned with supplying their plantations with the commodities needed to maintain sugar production. Roughly two-thirds of these 97 merchants, however, were solely involved in the provisioning trade (see Table A4, Appendix 2). The fact that so many English merchants with no other business links to Barbados drove a trade in provisions to the colony in the mid-seventeenth century attests to the great demand for raw materials and manufactured goods produced by the sugar boom, and suggests that large profits could be

⁹⁴ Richard H. Grove, *Green Imperialism: Colonial Expansion, Tropical Island Edens and the Origins of Environmentalism, 1600-1860* (Cambridge, 1995), pp. 63-71.

⁹⁵ TNA, CO1/12, f. 107.

made in the provisioning trade. Ligon marvelled at how £1000 spent on a cargo of clothes, assorted textiles, foodstuffs, and tools in England could be ‘doubled at the Barbados’ in the late 1640s.⁹⁶

Due to the newfound prominence of Barbados sugar to England’s overseas commerce, in the mid-1650s Parliament made a concerted effort to enact special regulations over trade with the island. These distinctive measures can be interpreted as a supplement to the Navigation Act passed several years earlier, and were therefore part of a broader legislative agenda to restrict Dutch participation in the carrying trade to the American plantations. In February 1656 the members of a committee convened ‘to take into their consideration the trade and navigation of this Commonwealth’ passed legislation placing controls over the Barbados provisioning trade. English merchants who wished to profit by shipping shoes, boots, horses, firearms, and ammunition to Barbados now had to obtain a formal license from Cromwell. The transportation of foodstuffs, alcohol, and tools were, however, exempt from such restrictions. Certain foods and clothes could even be shipped to the colony custom free. English shipmasters seeking to transport goods which were subject to the new controls were required to enter into bond at the customs house before their voyage, and would be heavily penalised if they chose to sell their merchandise somewhere other than Barbados. They also had to return to England within 18 months and present the commissioner of the customs with a valid certificate from the governor of Barbados (or his subordinates) confirming that their wares had been delivered to the island as agreed. Otherwise ship’s captains risked forfeiting their collateral payment.⁹⁷

One unforeseen consequence of this legislation is that it produced a great deal of source material for historians interested in English commerce with Barbados. During the Interregnum, it was a practical necessity for merchants and shipmasters who conducted lawful business operations to submit regular petitions to the Lord Protector pleading for warrants to supply Barbados with provisions. There are 61 surviving petitions for the period from May 1649 to December 1657 (Table 3.4, below). This dataset

⁹⁶ For Ligon’s description of the profits that could be made by shipping provisions to Barbados, see Ligon, *True and Exact History*, pp. 183-186.

⁹⁷ TNA, CO1/12, ff. 144-145, ‘At the committee appointed to take into their consideration the trade and navigation of this Commonwealth’, 11 February 1656; TNA, CO1/13, ff. 30-31, ‘A Report touching the transporting Horses &c to the Barbados’, 2 September 1656.

provides insights into which merchants were participating in the provisioning trade, and indicates which commodities were most coveted by planters in the Caribbean. Over two-thirds of the petitions were requests for warrants to transport draught horses, which were integral for keeping the sugar mills functioning. Furthermore, merchants repeatedly wrote to the Lord Protector for permission to supply Barbados with large shipments of shoes and boots that had been manufactured in England. Footwear for planters and indentured servants seems to have been constantly in demand in the Caribbean, probably because leather materials tend to perish rapidly in humid conditions. While the petition dataset is useful for making inferences about the nature of the provisioning trade to Barbados in the mid-seventeenth century, there are some major limitations with this body of source material which make it unsuitable for measuring the volume of trade with the colony. The most glaring issue with the dataset is that a significant proportion of the warrants granted by Cromwell permitted merchants to transport a smaller number of goods to Barbados than they had originally requested. For example, on multiple occasions Martin Noell requested licenses to transport 200 horses to Barbados, but was only sanctioned to dispatch 50.⁹⁸

⁹⁸ For examples, see *CSPC AWI*, Vol. 1., pp. 428-431 & pp. 436-437, 6 September 1655 & 8 February 1656.

Table 3.4. [Redacted]

English merchants profited by shipping to Barbados the raw materials required to construct sugar mills, along with the manufactured goods and draught animals necessary to ensure that the industry operated at full efficiency. The mill, boiling house and other structures used to process sugar cane were usually built from timber, and firewood was also used as the main source of fuel for the furnaces of the boiling house. The deforestation of Barbados over the course of the seventeenth century had major repercussions. It necessitated imports of wood, and merchants profited by supplying the island with lumber from Surinam,

St. Lucia, Virginia, and New England. Over time, plantation owners on Barbados managed to reduce their expenditure on imports of firewood by using a waste by-product of the milling process, called *burgasse*, as fuel for the boiling house.⁹⁹

The conversion of farmland and grazing pastures into sugar plantations forced the inhabitants of Barbados to become increasingly reliant on merchants to import staple foodstuffs. One of the results of the economic boom on Barbados in the 1640s and 1650s was that the population of the island exploded. The business of sugar production attracted increasing numbers of people to travel to the Caribbean and live on the island. These new inhabitants participated in the plantation economy and worked in the bustling ports of Bridgetown and Speightstown. The unfree population also saw striking levels of growth in this era, as thousands of indentured servants and enslaved Africans were forcefully brought to the colony to provide the labour which kept the sugar industry in operation. Although quantifying demographic changes in the seventeenth century is fraught with uncertainty, various estimates suggest that the population of Barbados increased from 10,000 to as many as 53,300 people over a twenty year period between 1640 and 1660.¹⁰⁰ Henry Whistler captured the general trend when he wrote in 1655 how the 'Illand is but small: but it maintains more soules then any peese of land of the bignis in the wordell'.¹⁰¹ To meet the subsistence needs of this growing population, small quantities of cassava and maize, often referred to as 'Indian corne' in the historical record, was raised in marginal land on the island.¹⁰² But it soon became evident that the tiny island of Barbados, with its sprawling sugar estates and expanding urban areas, could not provide enough food to satiate this rising population. Supplies of beef, pork, fish,

⁹⁹ Menard, *Sweet Negotiations*, p. 79. In 1679 Henry Drax instructed Richard Harwood that 'Wood will be much wanting therefore you should take a Convenient time when Shipp's ariue from St Lucea & its Cheape to store yourselfe there with'. Thompson, 'Henry Drax's Instructions', p. 598.

¹⁰⁰ For population estimates, see Pestana, *English Atlantic in an Age of Revolution*, p. 32, 229; McCusker and Menard, *The Economy of British America*, p. 153.

¹⁰¹ Firth, ed., *The Narrative of General Venables*, Appendix E., 'Extracts from Henry Whistler's Journal of the West India Expedition', pp. 145-147.

¹⁰² Ligon, *True and Exact History*, pp. 75-78; Anon., *Certain Inducements to well-minded People, Who are here straitned in their Estates or otherwise: or such as are willing out of Noble and publike Principles, to transport Themselves, or some Servants, or Agents for them into the West Indies, for the propagating of the Gospel, and increase of Trade* (n.d., c. 1643?), Huntington Library, San Marino, 221847 (repro), p. 2 & 8-9.

flour, oatmeal, dried peas, butter, cheese, rapeseed oil, linseed oil, beer, and wine were imported to the island by English merchants to meet this demand.¹⁰³

As well as providing indentured servants and enslaved Africans with a basic level of sustenance, plantation owners also had to ensure that their labourers had adequate supplies of clothing and footwear. The climate of Barbados meant that workers toiling for long hours in hot and humid conditions did not require clothing for warmth. Nevertheless, early modern social mores dictated that servants from England had to wear appropriate attire, even in tropical conditions. Differences in apparel also helped to reinforce race and gender distinctions on the plantation.¹⁰⁴ Due to high levels of wear and tear caused by performing gruelling labour in the fields, felling sharp sugar canes, and operating dangerous machinery, planters were obligated to replace the apparel of their workers every year.

The growing demand for manufactured goods from England, especially clothes and shoes, prompted the colonial legislature to pass laws improving market conditions for merchants. To further stimulate the provisioning trade to the island, the Barbados assembly repealed an act ‘for the rating of Shirts, Smocks, Shoes, and Drawers at certain prices’ in August 1650. The assembly believed this legislation, which fixed prices for clothing items at below the market rate to make them more affordable for planters, was stifling the supply of clothes and shoes to the colony, thereby leading ‘Marchants [to] bringe fewe of them over hether but lay out their moneys in such comodities by which they may make far greater profit’.¹⁰⁵ The petition dataset demonstrates that the Barbados Assembly was successful in achieving this outcome, for in the years following the passage of this act there were 19 requests from merchants living in London and Bristol for permission to supply the colony with large numbers of shoes and boots.

¹⁰³ TNA CO1/13, f. 29, ‘A particular of the Provisions humbly prayed to be annually sent to Barbadoes with the Reasons thereof, 23 July 1656.

¹⁰⁴ On the annual allotment of clothing to unfree labourers on Barbados, which differed by gender and race, see TNA CO1/13, f. 29; Ligon, *True and Exact History*, p. 190-191; Blome, *A Description of the Island of Jamaica*, p. 38.

¹⁰⁵ TNA, CO1/11, f. 39, ‘A repeale of part of an act formerly made for the rateing of Shirts, Smocks, Shooes and Drawers’, 9 August 1650.

English merchants also generated money by provisioning Barbados with draught animals. Horses, cattle, and donkeys played an integral role in the sugar industry. They brought raw cane from the fields to the mill, supplied the power necessary for driving the sugar mills, and also transported refined sugar to storehouses along the coastline. The strenuous work associated with grinding cane and carrying heavy loads caused the deaths of large numbers of horses, keeping demand high. Between 1649 and 1660, when the sugar boom was at its height, there are over 42 surviving petitions to the Lord Protector related to merchants seeking sanction to transport horses to Barbados. Merchants and planters frequently clamoured for an improved supply of these animals, which were sometimes known in the seventeenth century as ‘draught nags’.¹⁰⁶ During his brief stay on Barbados in 1655, Henry Whistler commented on the significance of horses to the functioning of the sugar industry. He observed that the animal-powered mills used by plantation owners to grind their sugar cane ‘destroy so many horses that it begors the planters, a good hors for the mill being worth 50^{li} starling mony’.¹⁰⁷ With the sale price of a good horse on Barbados in the mid-seventeenth century being double that of an enslaved African, it is no surprise that London merchants were keen to profit from this inflated demand, and supply sugar planters with hardy draught animals from a variety of locations, including England, Virginia, the Cape Verde Islands, and Norway.¹⁰⁸ Competition with military contractors for the New Model Army over access to a supply of horses may have been part of the reason why English merchants had to dispatch their vessels to such a variety of overseas markets to procure horses for the Barbados plantation system in the 1640s and 1650s.¹⁰⁹

¹⁰⁶ So important was a regular supply of cattle and horses to the sugar industry, that when a group of exiled Barbados planters submitted a petition to the Council of State in November 1650 pleading for their lands to be reinstated, they included a provision relating to the granting of licenses ‘for the transportation of Cattle and horses, for the supply of the Island, free of impositions and customs’. TNA, CO 1/11, f. 65.

¹⁰⁷ Firth, ed., *The Narrative of General Venables*, Appendix E., ‘Extracts from Henry Whistler’s Journal of the West India Expedition’, pp. 146-147. Henry Drax specified to his overseer Richard Harwood ‘to be very Carefull of horses’. He had previously been ‘A greatt Sufferer thorow the Carelesnes and Rogrey of Carters’ who did not heed his instructions to only use horses to transport sugar from the plantation to Bridgetown in the late afternoon and early hours of the morning. ‘[B]y which means they will awayde the heate of the day in their traveling[,] which Certainly is destructive both to horses and horned Beast’. Thompson, ‘Henry Drax Instructions’, p. 584.

¹⁰⁸ The sale price of an enslaved African in 1644 was £22 BMC. See Gragg, ‘To Procure Negroes’, p. 74.

¹⁰⁹ On military contractors supplying the New Model Army with horses, see Edwards, *Dealing in Death*; Robinson, ‘Horse Supply and the Development of the New Model Army’.

The great demand for draught animals in the English Caribbean meant that licenses to transport horses to Barbados were granted to all the leading London merchants who owned property and sugar mills on the island (see Table 3.4, above). Martin Noell, Maurice Thomson, William Pennoyer, and Richard Batson were each granted multiple warrants between 20 and 50 horses on the island between 1640 and 1660.¹¹⁰ Richard Batson was particularly important in provisioning the island with horses during the era of the sugar boom. The extant records of a court case heard in the High Court of Admiralty in 1659 reveals that a vessel owned by Richard Batson & Co., known as the *Tankervale*, ventured to Norway to acquire horses for the sugar mills in the English Caribbean. The supply of horses from Norway to Barbados, carried by Dutch and English traders, provides evidence for how the global networks of merchants contributed to developments in the Caribbean, and that during the seventeenth century the North Sea region was firmly integrated into wider Atlantic currents of commerce and exchange. According to the testimony of William Tickell, a shipmaster who supervised the voyage, the journey took the vessel ‘from this Port of London to Norway and there to take in horses; and was from thence to have gone to the Barbados and so back agayne to this Port’.¹¹¹ The Norwegian Fjord horse is well known for being a small, hardy, and agile breed: the perfect attributes for a draught animal working in the cramped conditions of an early Barbadian sugar mill. It is probable that English merchants learnt from their Dutch counterparts about the utility and value of Norwegian livestock, as there is earlier evidence of Dutch mariners making the journey from Norway to Barbados with horses.¹¹² Tickell explained that ‘att the sayd shipp arrivall in Norway’ Richard Batson’s factor there ‘did putt on board the sayd shipp forty five horses or thereabouts for their use and accompt to be carryed and transported from thence to the Barbadoes’. Unfortunately, while making the treacherous return voyage across the North Sea the vessel encountered rough seas. Nicholas Hamond, the barber surgeon on board the *Tankervale*, affirmed to the court that ‘upon the working and rolling of the sayd shipp in the sea’, the wooden stanchions in which the horses were

¹¹⁰ *Proceedings and Debates*, pp. 196-197, ‘The humble petition of William Pennoyer’, 14 October 1647; *Proceedings and Debates*, p. 197, ‘The humble petition of Maurice Thompson and Company’, 23 October 1647; *CSPC AWI*, Vol 1., pp. 403-405, 11 June 1653; *CSPC AWI*, Vol 1., p. 421, 14 February 1655.

¹¹¹ TNA, HCA 13/71, f. 167.

¹¹² TNA, HCA 13/70, f. 411; TNA, CO 1/66, f. 29. In July 1654 the Dutch-owned vessel the *Swan* sailed from Holland to Norway, where they ‘tooke in a lading of horses’. These animals were successfully transported across the North Sea and the Atlantic Ocean, before being sold to English planters on Barbados. According to a deposition submitted by the ship’s captain (Symon Peterson), 74 Norwegian horses were sold in the colony. Perhaps after learning about the great demand for draught animals on the island, the Dutch ship proceeded to make a trip to Cape Verde to purchase 30 asses and salt, which were then also sold on Barbados.

supported buckled and broke, causing them to fall ‘one upon another...so as all of them dyed’. Out of 45 horses which boarded Batson’s ship in Norway, only one stallion managed to survive when the stricken vessel arrived at Newcastle.¹¹³ Another example of ‘a losing voyage’ involved the Bristol merchant Abraham Lloyd, who picked up 176 assenegoes at the Cape Verde islands, but lost 134 to disease and rough seas during the 20-day journey to Barbados.¹¹⁴

Although the focus of this section has been on the role played by English merchants in the Barbados provisioning trade, we must not presume therefore that Caribbean commerce operated as an orderly mercantilist system in the mid-seventeenth century. Foreign merchants, and especially those from the Low Countries, played an integral role in the provisioning trade to Barbados. Transnational commerce gave colonists improved access to enslaved Africans, foodstuffs, tools, and draught animals.¹¹⁵ Provisions supplied by merchants at other English colonies, such as New England, Virginia, and Surinam, were another means by which the subsistence needs of Barbados and the material demands of the sugar industry were fulfilled.¹¹⁶ The importance of transnational and intercolonial commerce to the Barbadian sugar economy will be given sustained attention in Chapter Five.

4. Local Planters and the Financing of the Barbados Sugar Boom: A Reappraisal

We have seen how English merchants, and especially those in London, were pivotal to the development of a sugar industry on Barbados. They directly invested in plantation development, organised the supply of indentured servants and enslaved Africans, and drove a provisioning trade to the island. Before moving

¹¹³ TNA, HCA 13/71 f. 170.

¹¹⁴ Huntington Library, HM 648, ff. 22-23, ‘The Journal of Abraham Lloyd’.

¹¹⁵ Jonathan I. Israel, *Dutch Primacy in World Trade, 1585-1740* (Oxford, 1989), p. 206, 239-240; Koot, *Empire at the Periphery*, pp. 53-68. Klooster, *The Dutch Moment*, pp. 164-172.

¹¹⁶ Roberts, ‘Venturing Out’; Roberts, ‘Surrendering Surinam’.

on it is important to put into comparative perspective merchant contributions to the development of the Barbadian plantation economy by considering one other argument that has been advanced by historians who have studied how the expansion of sugar production in the early modern Caribbean was financed. David Eltis and Kenneth Morgan contend that the transition to sugar in the seventeenth-century Caribbean was funded locally, as the returns of tobacco cultivation and other minor cash crops were 'ploughed back' into the construction of refineries and the purchasing of stock.¹¹⁷ Menard and Puckrein have made a similar argument for Barbados. They suggest that large tobacco farmers were in the best position to experiment with sugar production in the early 1640s. This is because they had bought-up large estates when prices were low in the 1630s, had already cleared these plots for cultivation, were generating a steady stream of income by renting out land to tenants, and already owned a stock of indentured servants (and possibly a few enslaved Africans) that they could use to begin planting sugar cane. Menard and Puckrein have argued, therefore, that part of the capital needed to kick-start the sugar boom was generated locally by these planters, who reinvested the profits they had made through the production of tobacco, cotton, ginger, and indigo into the construction of sugar mills and the purchasing of enslaved Africans.¹¹⁸

It is true that some of the tobacco farmers who had lived on Barbados since the founding of the colony managed to consolidate their landholdings and expand their business operations. In his analysis of the 1680 census return for Barbados, Richard Dunn has calculated that nearly 40 percent of sugar magnates in that year had family members living on the island in the 1630s, before the transition to a sugar economy.¹¹⁹ Some tobacco planters who had owned land on the island since the 1630s managed to make a fortune by venturing in the sugar industry. The career of the renowned planter James Drax is the most impressive example of this. Drax is reported to have arrived on Barbados with only £300, but after continually improving his annual profit through good plantation management, enjoyed a life of luxury on

¹¹⁷ Eltis, *Rise of African Slavery*, 217-18; Kenneth Morgan, *Slavery, Atlantic Trade, and the British Economy, 1660-1800* (Cambridge, 2001), pp. 54-5.

¹¹⁸ Puckrein, *Little England*, pp. 64-65; Menard, *Sweet Negotiations*, p. 11, 61.

¹¹⁹ Dunn, *Sugar and Slaves*, p. 97.

the island, and was said to be reluctant to return to England until he was able to afford an estate worth £10,000.¹²⁰

The process by which some planters achieved this was outlined by George Downing. In August 1645 Downing wrote to his cousin John Winthrop Jr. in New England to explain how to establish a successful plantation on Barbados from scratch. A ‘man that will settle ther’ must first ‘looke to procure servants’. From experience, Downing knew that ‘with good husbandry’ a planter would be able to expand his operations, and ‘procure Negroes...out of the encrease of your owne plantation’. In the last year alone, colonists on Barbados had reportedly purchased ‘no lesse than a thousand Negroes’. The profits planters made from the cultivation and sale of tropical commodities meant that the more enslaved Africans ‘they buie, the better able they are to buye, for in a yeare and halfe they will earne (with God's blessing) as much as they cost’.¹²¹ With an increased labour stock came increased agricultural productivity, and thereby revenue growth.

Tobacco farmers with large estates and a few enslaved Africans, such as James Drax, were certainly in the best position to experiment with sugar cultivation. It was the agricultural trials undertaken by these entrepreneurs, as part of the effort towards diversifying the colony’s export crops in the early 1640s, which lay the foundations for the island’s sugar industry. But were reinvestments of profits generated by tobacco planters significant in financing the transition to sugar on Barbados in the 1640s? It does not necessarily follow that because these planters were the first to trial sugar cultivation that they were also the group which provided most of the funding necessary for the rapid expansion of the sugar industry on the island. While it was cheap to experiment with growing sugar using a few labourers on a smallholding, as James Parker’s observation in 1646 that an investment of just £200 could ‘quickly gaine an estate by sugar which thrives wonderfully’ reveals, that crop was largely useless without the industrial machinery needed to convert the raw cane into sugar crystals. What made the entry costs to sugar production so

¹²⁰ Ligon, *True and Exact History*, p. 168.

¹²¹ *Winthrop Papers*, Vol. 5, p. 43, George Downing to John Winthrop, Jr., 26 August 1645. Also published in Donnan, *Documents Illustrative of the Slave Trade to America* Vol. 1., pp. 125-126.

high was the expense associated with the construction of sugar mills and the acquisition of enslaved Africans.¹²² It would be wrong, therefore, to characterise Drax's experience as anything other than exceptional. The low price fetched by Barbados tobacco in the 1630s and 1640s offered little chance for the average planter to accumulate the capital needed to finance these purchases.

Barbadian planters encountered considerable difficulties when trying to establish a sugar plantation in the 1640s, because without external assistance from English merchants they lacked the financial means necessary to support their business endeavours. For instance, when planning his second attempt to become a successful plantation-owner on Barbados in the late 1640s, Samuel Winthrop wrote to his brother in New England and complained that his greatest difficulty would be 'my first Setling, my stock being verrie small'. Another New England man, Richard Vines, struggled to raise enough capital to make the successful transition from being a tobacco and cotton planter to cultivating sugar on Barbados. In a letter to John Winthrop, Vines bemoaned how he was finding it tough to turn a profit by reason of 'my great payments for my plantations and negroes and other necessary disbursments already paid to the value of 40000 lbs of tobacco'.¹²³ William Powrey experienced similar difficulties. He wrote to Archibald Hay in September 1645 to report how those 'that are upon the design of sugar here prosper well and make exceeding good sugar', but that his own attempts to begin sugar production were being hindered by a lack of servant labour and the cost of 50,000 lb. of tobacco required to construct his 'ingenio'.¹²⁴ To be entirely clear, I think that the proceeds generated by the cultivation of minor crops such as tobacco were enough to meet the annual working capital demands of a Barbadian plantation. But I am not at all convinced that the sale of poor-quality Barbados tobacco and other commodities in the 1630s generated enough surplus revenue to meet the capital requirements needed to set up a functional sugar plantation, especially with the speed seen on Barbados.

¹²² *Winthrop Papers*, Vol. 5, p. 84, James Parker to John Winthrop, 24 June 1646. On the capital requirements of a sugar plantation, see Sheridan, *Sugar and Slavery*, pp. 264-266.

¹²³ *Winthrop Papers*, Vol. 5, p. 254, Samuel Winthrop to John Winthrop, Jr., 18 September 1648; *Winthrop Papers*, Vol. 5, pp. 171-172, Richard Vines to John Winthrop, 19 July 1647.

¹²⁴ NRS, Hay Papers, GD34/945/3, William Powrey to Archibald Hay, 10 September 1645.

How did planters living on Barbados fund the transition to sugar, if not through reinvesting the profits of plantation production accumulated during the 1630s? The primary source evidence suggests there were two options open to planters. First, planters could seek external assistance from a merchant who would extend them a line of credit. This delayed repayment of the start-up costs for several years, after which it was expected that sugar production would be underway, thus enabling the planter to satisfy his creditor. Second, prospective sugar planters could become involved in trade directly, using the high mark-up on goods shipped to the American colonies to quickly generate the capital needed to speculate in the sugar industry.

Credit was the foundation of the economy in early modern England. Craig Muldrew's detailed analysis of the trading centre of King's Lynn and Stephen Guscott's study of the Manchester textile merchant Humphrey Chetham have illuminated how networks of debt and obligation were integral to both the household and market economies in seventeenth-century England, and that the intricacies of long chains of credit were mostly stored in people's minds rather than written down in account books.¹²⁵ Due to a lack of specie circulating in the colonial economy, credit relationships were also the foundation of transatlantic trade in the seventeenth-century English empire. Access to credit supplied by merchants was the main method through which planters on Barbados financed the transition to sugar production. Indeed, I have yet to find an example of a successful sugar planter on mid-seventeenth-century Barbados who was not working in partnership with one or more English merchants. This was an interdependent business relationship. Planters were reliant on merchants for credit to fund the construction of sugar mills and to access supplies of unfree labour and provisions, while merchants needed tropical commodities cultivated by planters to sell for a profit in European markets. In July 1645, for instance, the Barbados planter William Hilliard and the Bristol merchant Samuel Farmer entered into five-year partnership. As part of the deal Farmer received a one-third share in the proceeds of Hilliard's plantation, and in return

¹²⁵ Muldrew, *Economy of Obligation*, ch. 3; S. J. Guscott, *Humphrey Chetham 1580-1653: Fortune, Politics and Mercantile Culture in Seventeenth-Century England* (Manchester, 2003), pp. 23-29, 38-43.

promised to 'putt upon ye estate in partnership...ninty sufficient and able Negro slaves' before 30 September 1646.¹²⁶

The importance of credit to Barbadian market transactions is highlighted by surviving merchant accounts. 35 percent of the provisions transported on the *Abraham* in 1638 were sold on credit. Extensions of credit took on special significance when high-value goods were being exchanged: 84 percent of the enslaved Africans sold by the owners of the *Marie Bonadventure* in 1644 were sold on credit, for instance.¹²⁷ The huge volume of litigation in the Mayor's Court of London during the 1650s and 1660s regarding financial obligations made between English merchants and Barbadian planters is another testament to the crucial role which credit played in financing the sugar boom.¹²⁸ Proposals in 1661 to create an internal loan market on Barbados through the formation of a land bank, which would have lent money on landed security at a rate of 6 percent per annum, also speaks to the incessant demand for access to credit on the island.¹²⁹ A treatise from the 1690s, which laments the difficulties faced by English merchants when trying to collect debts in the colonies, provides a succinct description of the importance of merchant credit to the Barbadian economy in the mid-seventeenth century, and is worth quoting at length:

On the first settlement of the Plantations particularly in the island of barbados they planted Tobacco, Ginger, and Cotton, and then any man that had instruments for digging and clearing the ground could manage a small plantation himself, without any stock or other help...but since the setting up of sugar works in that Island (about 50 years since), the planting of Tobacco, Cotton, and Ginger, is in a great measure disused as unprofitable, and no sugar work can be managed without a considerable stock. Such a work with Negro's and other things sufficient to employ one windmill only (which is the smallest sort of sugar work) will not cost much less than £5000 sterling. Since therefore the plantation of sugar cannot be managed without employing

¹²⁶ BDA, RB 3/2, pp. 220-222. For examples of similar partnerships between planters and merchants on Barbados in the 1640s, see BDA, RB 3/3, pp. 574-577, 579-585.

¹²⁷ For the *Abraham*, see TNA, HCA 30/636/2, 'Abraham Barbados Accounts'; TNA, HCA 30/636/4, 'Ledger for Shippe Abraham'. For the *Marie Bonadventure*, see Menard, *Sweet Negotiations*, pp. 63-64, Table 12 & Table 13.

¹²⁸ LMA, MCD Boxes 1-12.

¹²⁹ Sheridan, *Sugar and Slavery*, p. 279.

great summes therein, whatsoever is done to secure the certain profession of purchasers, or reimbursement of sumes advanced by adventurers, would best promote that trade which like all others must in a great measure be carried on by Credit.¹³⁰

The amount of money loaned by English merchants to Barbados planters in the era of the sugar boom was large: Menard estimates that £1 million sterling was spent on enslaved Africans alone between 1640 and 1660. Most of these sales involved market exchanges based around credit.¹³¹ Why did English merchants extend so much credit to planters on a distant Caribbean island, which most of them had never visited and was over a month's sail away? How could they be sure they would be repaid? The answers to these questions hinge upon security. Loans offered to planters on Barbados in the 1640s were more secure than elsewhere in the English empire because of a variety of intersecting geographical, environmental, and political factors, which were described in detail in Chapter Two. The legal apparatus of English colonies such as Barbados was also favourable to creditors, especially when compared to that which prevailed in the Iberian empires. Loans offered by English merchants to colonial planters were made secure by legal agreements to mortgage plantations and enslaved Africans if money was not repaid in a timely manner, and creditors operating in the English Atlantic world had extensive powers to use the colonial courts to seize these collateral assets if necessary.¹³²

What Muldrew has termed the 'currency of reputation' was the mediating factor in early modern credit transactions. The creditworthiness of an individual was a social judgement made by a creditor about the character and financial competency of their client, which was used to determine whether the client could be trusted to repay their debts in the future. Credit relations were thus founded upon reputation and familiarity.¹³³ Menard has argued that the primary reason why English merchants were willing to extend

¹³⁰ BL, Add. Ms. 27382, f. 193. For a similar account, written in 1659, which also demonstrates the importance of merchant credit to the development of the Barbados sugar industry, see TNA, CO 1/13, f. 148, 'Peticon and papers of Robert Knightly Sr Merchants Barbados'.

¹³¹ Menard, *Sweet Negotiations*, p. 49.

¹³² *Ibid.*, pp. 55-56. For the Iberian comparison, see Jacob M. Price, 'Credit in the Slave Trade and Plantation Economies', in Barbara L. Solow, ed., *Slavery and the Rise of the Atlantic System* (New York, 1991), pp. 293-340; Menard, 'Law, Credit, the Supply of Labour'. For examples of mortgages involving merchant creditors on Barbados in the 1640s, see BDA, RB 3/2, p. 402, 519, 547-549, 605-607.

¹³³ Muldrew, *Economy of Obligation*, pp. 2-3.

credit to prospective sugar planters in the 1640s was because Barbadian farmers had demonstrated their competency in the cultivation of tropical commodities such as tobacco in the preceding decade. This is a logical argument, because having a reputation as an effective plantation manager would have helped to foster the trust needed for merchants to be sure that loans would be repaid on time.¹³⁴ Unfortunately, however, there is no primary source evidence to support Menard's assertion. His argument also depends upon the economy of Barbados being dynamic and prosperous in the pre-sugar era. But as we saw in Chapter One, Barbados tobacco was frequently described as the 'worst of all tobaccos' during the 1630s, and merchants deliberately ventured to Virginia and St. Christopher to secure higher-grade leaf.

Based on such evidence, I am not convinced that planters on Barbados had shown the English merchant community that they were particularly effective plantation-owners during the 1630s and early 1640s.

Furthermore, Menard's argument would only make sense if it was solely merchants who were involved in the American tobacco trade who financed the growth of the sugar industry on Barbados. Some important merchant financiers of the sugar boom did have a background in the tobacco trade, and their existing business relationships with Barbados planters provided a platform for future investment. Though, as we saw in Chapter Two, not all of the leading merchant financiers of the sugar boom were participants in the American tobacco trade, and therefore did not have connections to planters on Barbados in the 1630s and early 1640s. It is highly unlikely, therefore, that they would have had much knowledge about the competency of Barbadian tobacco farmers, nor that this could have informed their decision-making process about whether to extend prospective sugar planters with generous credit.

Studying merchant accounts helps us to come to a better understanding of the rationale behind merchant business practices, as it permits an analysis of who in Barbadian society was being extended the most credit in the era sugar boom. A high social standing and reputation on Barbados and in England appears to have been the key to securing a loan from a merchant in the mid-seventeenth century. Appointment to a prominent office within the colonial administration was the most important means by which planters

¹³⁴ Menard, *Sweet Negotiations*, p. 11, 61.

could improve their reputation and creditworthiness in the eyes of English merchants. For example, Governor William Hawley, President Pierce, and the councillor Edward Cranfield were given first pick of the indentured servants transported on the *Abraham* in 1638. The two planters who purchased the largest number of enslaved Africans on credit from the owners of the *Marie Bonadventure* in 1644, James Drax and William Hilliard, were both men of lofty social standing on Barbados due to the numerous public offices they held within the colonial council, assembly, militia, and parish vestries.¹³⁵ An inventory of the Guinea Company's stock taken in 1644 reveals that the company was also owed 39,613 lb. of cotton from 13 of the inhabitants, presumably due to the sale of enslaved Africans advanced to planters on credit. Governor Phillip Bell owed the company 19,846 lb. of cotton, around half their total debts on Barbados.¹³⁶

Also significant was whether planters on Barbados had a personal connection with merchants. As we will see shortly, many of the early plantation-owners on Barbados had come from mercantile families in England, and it is probable therefore that some planters were still well-connected within merchant circles. The regular trips which many Barbadian planters made back to London during the 1640s and 1650s would have solidified these personal ties. Documents recording the details of those who arrived in London from 'beyond ye Seas' and presented themselves before the Council of State reveal how at least ten planters and merchants who resided in the Caribbean returned to England between 1655 and 1657 to conduct business in the metropole.¹³⁷

Prospective sugar planters in the 1640s could also participate in trade to raise the capital necessary to fund the construction of sugar mills and the acquisition of enslaved Africans. According to Richard Ligon, the

¹³⁵ For the *Abraham*, see TNA, HCA 30/636/2, 'Abraham Barbados Accounts'; TNA, HCA 30/636/4, 'Ledger for Shippe Abraham'. For the *Marie Bonadventure*, see Menard, *Sweet Negotiations*, pp. 63-64, Table 12 & Table 13. For the composition of the Barbados council in 1641 and 1643, see Library of Congress, Charles Pinfold Papers, 'Extracts from the Council Books in Barbados', 13 October 1641; NRS, Hay Papers, GD34/923/38, 'Letter from the Inhabitants of Barbados to the Earle of Carlilse touching the three pound per acre' 13 September 1643.

¹³⁶ TNA, SP 16/540/4, f. 389 & 394, 'Series of documents relating to the affairs of the Guinea Company, from 18th February 1642-43 to 8th July 1647, but mostly of the year 1644'.

¹³⁷ BL, Add. Ms. 34015, f. 2, 6, 11, 20, 21, 25, 32, 39, 40, 'A Booke containing the names as well of all such persons as have come from beyond ye Seas and made their psonall appearances at this Office of ye places from whence hey came and where they intend to lodge together with their business and the correspondents of such of ye said persons as are foreigners'. The ten Caribbean residents who were recorded as having visited London from 1665-1657 were: James Watson, Thomas Carter, Thomas Knapton, Henry Howman, Charles Rich, John Knight, Peter Colleton, Thomas Crispe, Robert Walker, and Thomas Norton.

‘most knowing men of the Island’ reported that it was sensible to purchase a ‘ready furnished’ plantation.¹³⁸ But the price for a fully functioning sugar plantation, complete with indentured servants, enslaved Africans, draught animals, a mill, boiling house, and curing house, stood at £14,000.¹³⁹ Only the most affluent and creditworthy members of English society, such as the gentry or London merchants, could afford to purchase a lavish estate outright. Ligon did, however, provide helpful instructions for how entrepreneurs with as little as £1000 of liquid capital could expand their business operations on Barbados to the point where they would be able to pay for a 500-acre sugar plantation.

Ligon was writing for an English audience, not for established Barbadian planters. But it is crucial to note that nowhere in this lengthy set of instructions does he specify that purchasing a plantation and reinvesting profits generated through the production of tobacco, cotton, indigo, or ginger were an effective method for men of modest means to get started in the Barbados sugar industry. Based on his experience on Barbados in the late 1640s, it was trade which was the best way to quickly raise the capital necessary to speculate in the sugar industry. Ligon began by stating that £1145 of start-up capital should be used to purchase commodities, which while relatively cheap in England, were in high demand on Barbados and could therefore be sold at excessive rates. As we saw in Chapter One, it was clothes, shoes, foodstuffs, alcohol, and tools, which fetched the highest price at English colonies in the Caribbean. This cargo was to be dispatched to Barbados, along with a trustworthy ‘correspondent’ (or, in other words, a factor) to oversee the sale of these goods in exchange for tropical commodities, which would then be shipped back to England for resale over the space of eighteen months. According to Ligon’s calculations:

this Cargo being doubled at the *Barbados*, that returned back, will produce at least 50 *per cent*. And then your Cargo, which was 1,145£ at setting out, and being doubled there to 2,290£ will be at your return for *England* 3,345£ of which I will allow for freight, and all other charges 335£ so there remains to account 3,100£ clear.

¹³⁸ Ligon, *True and Exact History*, p. 66.

¹³⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 183.

At this point the factor on Barbados should begin the process of bargaining for a fully furnished 500-acre sugar plantation worth £14,000. This was to be purchased on credit and paid for in installments spread out over three years. The proceeds from the first voyage should be used to fund additional trading ventures on the same model, which along with the sugar grown on the plantation, would make it possible to meet the annual debt repayments. After just three years, then, 'you have your Plantation clear, and freed of all debts'.¹⁴⁰

The available evidence indicates that reinvestments of profits generated by plantation production were not as pivotal to financing the transition to sugar on Barbados in the 1640s as scholars would have us believe. It was not proceeds from tobacco plantations, but mercantile activity and extensions of credit by merchants, which provided most of the capital necessary for planters to speculate in the Barbados sugar industry. Part of the reason why this has not been highlighted by other historians is because of the historiographical tendency to distinguish merchants from planters. Divisions of labour between merchants and planters were not as pronounced in the first half of the seventeenth century as they would become in the eighteenth century. As we have already seen, it was common for London merchants such as Martin Noell to cut out the middleman in the 1640s, and directly purchase sugar plantations themselves, becoming 'merchant-planters' in the process.

Furthermore, Richard Dunn has shown how many core members of the Barbadian planter oligarchy in 1638, including prodigious figures such as Reynold Alleyne, Benjamin Berringer, William Bulkely, Christopher Codrington, James Drax, Samuel Farmer, Thomas Frere, Richard Guy, William Hilliard, James Holdip, Thomas Hothersall, John Pears, Edward Pye, Thomas Rous, William Speight, George Standfast, and John Yeamans, all came from merchant families. Out of 62 'charter members of the Barbados elite', 45 (just over two-thirds) have surnames which appear in T. K. Rabb's list of 6,000

¹⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, pp. 183-187.

persons who invested in overseas commercial ventures from 1575 to 1630. These surnames are sufficiently unusual to make it likely that they were members of the same family.¹⁴¹

This suggests, therefore, that mercantile capital was important in financing the clearing of the land and establishing of tobacco plantations on Barbados in the late 1620s and 1630s. Given their backgrounds in merchant families, it should not come as a surprise that many of these men also continued to engage in mercantile activity while managing their plantations in the Caribbean. James Drax, for instance, continued to maintain extensive business connections in London and Amsterdam while managing his plantation on Barbados. He organised a 'voyage for negroes to or upon the Coaste of Affrica' in 1654, and upon his return to England towards the end of his life, sat on the Court of Committees of the East India Company as a director between 1659 and early 1661.¹⁴² Like most planters on Barbados in the 1640s and 1650s, Drax was primarily interested in making money, and consequently his business portfolio encompassed both trade and plantation production. The distinction between merchants and planters will continue to be used in this study as a matter of convenience. But it is important to remember such divisions are inadequate in capturing the diverse business interests of plantation owners in the Caribbean during the early seventeenth century.

Despite not being as important on Barbados in the 1640s as previously thought, reinvesting the profits of plantation production was nevertheless a method used by colonists elsewhere in the English Caribbean to start-up their own sugar industries in the period between 1650 and 1690. This was outlined by the merchant-turned-planter Cary Heylar, who in 1671 described how on Jamaica it was 'the custom of the country' to set up a new plantation by starting with a couple of enslaved Africans and an overseer, and to use them to begin planting commodities which had low entry costs, such as tobacco and ginger. The proceeds of the first year's crop were then 'employed to buy a Negro or two more, and they will beget others, so that in 7 years time it will produce a hopefull business'.¹⁴³ I contend that the lack of heavy

¹⁴¹ Dunn, *Sugar and Slaves*, p. 58; Theodore K. Rabb, *Enterprise and Empire: Merchant and Gentry Investment in the Expansion of England, 1575-1630* (Cambridge, Mass., 1967), pp. 234-410; Gragg, *Englishmen Transplanted*, p. 140.

¹⁴² For Drax's slave trading voyage, see BDA, RB3/2, pp. 629-630 & 634-635. For Drax as a director of the EIC, see BL, IOR, E/3/85, ff. 225-229, London to Fort Cormantine and St. Helena, 23 June 1659.

¹⁴³ Somerset Record Office, Heylar MS, Cary Heylar to William Heylar, 25 January 1671.

capital investment into Jamaica and the Leeward Islands by English merchants goes a long way towards explaining why the advent of a commercial sugar industry there was so slow when compared to Barbados. Without outside assistance local planters needed to reinvest their annual revenue from plantation production into the construction of sugar mills and the purchase of enslaved Africans. The transition to sugar on these islands was therefore a more gradual process than that which occurred on Barbados at mid-century.

This section has argued that merchants were more significant than tobacco planters in providing the capital necessary to precipitate the sugar boom. However, it must be emphasised that this conclusion should not detract from the fact that planters did make central contributions to the development of a plantation economy based around sugar monoculture on Barbados. The emergence of integrated plantations and the slave gang system on Barbados are good examples of how enterprising planters developed brutal, but nonetheless pioneering, management techniques in their effort to extract maximum profits from their unfree workforce.¹⁴⁴ The initiative taken by Barbadian planters to conduct agricultural experiments with sugar and learn from Brazilians already skilled in growing tropical goods, along with the financial support and supply of unfree laborers provided by merchants in the City of London, combined to produce an extremely profitable plantation economy on Barbados in the 1640s and 1650s.

Conclusion

London merchants played a central role in financing the expansion of plantation agriculture and sugar cultivation on Barbados. The most important contributions they made to this process were investing capital into improving plantations and extending credit to planters. Crushing and refining sugar cane was

¹⁴⁴ On the slave gang system, which emerged on Barbados in the wake of the sugar boom, see Menard, *Sweet Negotiations*, pp. 96-97; Thompson, 'Henry Drax's Instructions', pp. 578-579; Newman, *A New World of Labor*, pp. 203-210.

a capital-intensive business in the mid seventeenth century, but by supplying the large sums of money needed to develop a functioning industry on Barbados, English merchants were able to take advantage of the spike in sugar prices caused by warfare between the Dutch and Portuguese in northern Brazil. The plantation system also required an expendable and malleable labour force to perform the exhausting work of planting and cultivating the sugar cane. London merchants deployed their political connections in the Interregnum government and made use of their existing overseas commercial networks to satisfy the insatiable demand for labour on Barbados. Martin Noell, Thomas Kendall, and John Parris, all received multiple warrants from Cromwell to transport indentured servants from the British Isles, while other London merchants, such as John Wood and Richard Batson used their extensive experience in West African trade to conduct successful slave trading expeditions.

By devoting their resources to the production of cash crops, London merchants helped to convert the island into an economy based around sugar monoculture. As the landscape of Barbados was rapidly transformed from dense forest to vast plantations of sugar, neatly divided into land parcels by surveyors, the inhabitants of the island quickly became dependent on imports of foodstuffs, lumber, manufactured goods, and draught animals to subsist. Many of the same merchants who had stimulated the growth of the sugar industry on Barbados by developing plantations on the island also wrested control of the colony's provisioning trade, and generated further profits by supplying planters with raw materials and staple commodities. Horses were some of the most valued commodities that merchants shipped to the island, due to their role in driving animal-powered mills and carrying merchandise to coastal storehouses. By detailing the wide range of commercial activities undertaken by English merchants on Barbados, this chapter has deepened historical understanding about the role of these traders in precipitating economic transformations on Barbados in the mid-seventeenth century.

We then proceeded to investigate the significance of local planters in financing the Barbados sugar boom. Previous historians have suggested that these planters played a prominent role in supplying needed capital during the 1640s, because they reinvested the profits generated from the sale of tobacco and cotton into the construction of sugar mills and the purchase of enslaved Africans. But a reappraisal of the available

evidence reveals that this assertion is not entirely accurate. First, the low-quality tobacco cultivated by Barbados planters in the 1630s would have afforded the average planter little opportunity to accumulate the large amounts of capital necessary to speculate in the sugar industry without external assistance, which mostly took the form of extensions of credit by London merchants. Second, a close reading of Ligon's history, the most detailed contemporary source we have for understanding the sugar boom, reveals that it was trade, not plantation production, which was the recommended method for quickly raising the capital needed to invest in a Barbadian sugar plantation. Distinctions between merchants and planters were less pronounced in the early seventeenth century. Most of the entrepreneurs who settled on Barbados and ventured in the sugar industry, including James Drax, began their careers as merchants, and their business portfolios encompassed both trade and the cultivation of tropical commodities. Most of the capital used to finance the Barbados sugar boom in the 1640s, therefore, was not raised locally through plantation production. It was generated through trade and extensions of credit by merchants in the City of London. But we must not assume that this was also true elsewhere. London merchants were less enthusiastic in extending credit and speculating in sugar production on Jamaica, St. Kitts, Nevis, Montserrat, and Antigua between 1660 and 1690. Future research may reveal that the more gradual process of reinvesting profits generated through plantation production provides an explanation for why the transition to sugar in these colonies was less rapid when compared to Barbados.

The next chapter will investigate whether the commercial influence wielded by the merchant financiers of the sugar boom translated into political power in Westminster and Barbados.

Chapter Four. London Merchants and the Governance of Barbados, 1640-1672

In September 1659, merchants and planters who traded to Barbados gathered for a meeting at the Cardinal's Cap, a tavern in London situated at the meeting point of Cornhill and Lombard streets.¹ Powerful men with political connections within Westminster and business interests in the English Caribbean, including Martin Noell, Thomas Povey, and James Drax, were in attendance. The purpose of their meeting was to interview a new candidate for the position of governor on Barbados. Vincent Gookin, an MP and colonial bureaucrat who had been involved in the Down Survey of Ireland, was in advanced talks with the Council of State to secure appointment to the office.² Although the details of their conversation are now lost, the merchants ended their meeting impressed with Gookin's qualifications, and gave him their 'full approbation'. It was resolved, however, not to lobby for his admission to the government of Barbados until the Council of State had decided the future of the current governor, Daniel Searle. However, any plans to alter the governor of Barbados were quickly halted when the tragic news that Vincent Gookin had taken ill and died of a fever reached Parliament just weeks later.³ The meeting convened at the Cardinal's Cap in 1659 suggests that London merchants did not just purchase plantations and establish trade routes to Barbados, but also sought to exert political influence over the colony in the era of the sugar boom.

¹ For the remainder of the seventeenth century the Cardinal's Cap tavern (sometimes known as the Cardinal's Hat) was an important location where merchants and planters with Caribbean interests gathered to consume intoxicants and discuss business. By the early eighteenth century it had been supplanted by the Jamaica Coffee House, also in Cornhill ward. Lilian M. Penson, 'The London West India Interest in the Eighteenth Century', *The English Historical Review*, Vol. 36, No. 143 (1921), pp. 376-377; Lilian M. Penson, *The Colonial Agents of the British West Indies: a Study in Colonial Administration, mainly in the Eighteenth Century* (London, 1924), p. 183. For the location of the Cardinal's Cap, see John Stow, 'Cornehill warde', in *A Survey of London, reprinted from the Text of 1603*, ed. C L Kingsford (Oxford, 1908), pp. 187-200. British History Online <http://www.british-history.ac.uk/no-series/survey-of-london-stow/1603/> pp. 187-200 (Accessed 21 June 2019).

² Vincent Gookin's family was heavily involved in Puritan colonisation schemes in the Atlantic world. His brother, the soldier and merchant Daniel Gookin, first settled in Boston in 1644. He soon became an authority figure in the Massachusetts colony, serving on the governing council for several decades, and in the 1650s even worked for Cromwell to persuade New England colonists to relocate to Jamaica. Wendy Warren, *New England Bound: Slavery and Colonization in Early America* (New York, 2016), p. 172; Karen Ordahl Kupperman, 'Errand to the Indies: Puritan Colonization from Providence Island through the Western Design', *The William and Mary Quarterly*, Vol. 45, No. 1 (1988), p. 96.

³ BL, Egerton MS 2395, f. 177 & ff. 179-181, Thomas Povey to Daniel Searle, 20 October 1659.

This chapter will investigate whether the dynamism of the Barbadian economy in the 1640s caused London merchants to become increasingly attentive to the island's political affairs. It will demonstrate how merchants who had poured money into purchasing land, constructing sugar mills, and acquiring enslaved Africans wanted Barbados to be governed in a way that suited their investments: they could not afford to let political crisis in the colony threaten the security of their assets. But how successful were London merchants in their lobbying? Were merchants who had invested in the sugar boom well represented in the institutions formed in London to administer England's empire? And did the reach of London merchants extend all the way to the Caribbean, enabling them to govern the island in a way which suited their investments? Such questions have not figured prominently in previous studies, as historians have usually made colonists, rather than English merchants, the focal point of their analyses.⁴

1. The Councils of Trade and Plantations in Westminster, 1640-1664

The first section of this chapter investigates the power wielded by merchants in the councils, committees, and boards formed in London to govern trade and colonial affairs between 1640 and 1664. In doing so, it highlights two broad trends. First, that merchant representation within these organisations, and thus their influence over policy formation, increased over time. Of course, merchants never wholly dominated the councils and committees which dealt with trade and plantations, but if we compare the composition of these administrative bodies at the start and end of our period, it is noticeable that the numbers of merchants appointed to serve on them increased at the expense of aristocrats and MPs. Second, that in a process which began in 1653, but became most pronounced after 1660, the power of merchants who had invested in the Barbados sugar boom within these institutions expanded. It is important to bear in mind

⁴ E.g. Pestana, *English Atlantic in An Age of Revolution*; Donoghue, *Fire Under the Ashes*. Notable exceptions to this trend are Robert Brenner and Robert Bliss, who have examined in detail the political activities of the London merchant community in this period. But the focus of Bliss' study was not the Caribbean, and Brenner ended his analysis with the demise of the Commonwealth government in 1653. This has left a lot of unanswered questions about the political power wielded by London merchants with Caribbean investments between 1640 and 1672. Brenner, *Merchants and Revolution*; Bliss, *Revolution and Empire*.

that these merchants had diverse business portfolios: they profited from tax-farming offices and other overseas ventures such as the East India and Levant Companies. We must be careful, therefore, not to overemphasise the importance of Barbados. But it is striking how many leading investors in the Barbados sugar boom sat on the Council of Foreign Plantations between 1660 and 1664. I argue that the growing representation of London merchants with business interests in the Caribbean in advisory committees in Westminster was another product of the wealth generated by sugar and slavery. However, direct merchant influence over the bodies formed to administer the empire at the imperial centre was not long-lasting. By the 1680s, civil servants such as William Blathwayt had taken command of the colonial bureaucracy in London.⁵ But the fact that there were familial connections between these career bureaucrats and the merchant investors in the sugar boom (Blathwayt, for instance, was the nephew and protégé of the Barbadian investor Thomas Povey), suggests there was some continuity from the 1660s in terms of personnel and the heavy representation of those with Caribbean interests within these administrative councils.

It is also worth emphasising from the outset what this section is not. It is not intended to be a detailed analysis of the involvement of merchants with investments in Barbados in popular politics and Parliamentary debates on the model of other studies by historians such as David Underdown, Blair Worden, Keith Lindley, and Robert Brenner.⁶ Here we are solely concerned with exploring which merchants held power in the committees formed by various English governments to administer trade and plantations, and how that changed over time. As Ian K. Steele has observed, it is crucial to study who was serving on these committees, because in the seventeenth century such organisations ‘should be viewed as a changing group of individuals rather than a bureaucratic institution’: the influence of these councils in

⁵ Stephen Saunders Webb, ‘William Blathwayt, Imperial Fixer: From Popish Plot to Glorious Revolution’, *The William and Mary Quarterly*, Vol. 25, No. 1 (1968), pp. 3-21; Stephen Saunders Webb, ‘William Blathwayt, Imperial Fixer: Muddling Through to Empire, 1689-1717’, *The William and Mary Quarterly*, Vol. 26, No. 3 (1969), pp. 373-415.

⁶ David Underdown, *Pride's Purge: Politics in the Puritan Revolution* (Oxford, 1971); Worden, *Rump Parliament*; Lindley, *Popular Politics*; Brenner, *Merchants and Revolution*.

‘Whitehall and the colonies was related to [their] membership’.⁷ Steele’s comments relate specifically to the Board of Trade formed in 1696, but his analysis is equally applicable to its predecessor institutions.

In the early years of England’s overseas expansion a variety of means were used to govern the American colonies. Joint-stock companies were given royal charters to settle overseas territories. The Stuart monarchs also granted courtiers proprietary patents to establish colonies.⁸ It was generally left to corporate bodies and proprietors to govern their colonial holdings, although the Privy Council sometimes formed temporary committees to offer advice and legislate on issues related to colonial affairs. More permanent bodies to oversee England’s commercial and colonial interests began to be formed in the 1630s. The Committee for Trade was appointed in 1630 and dealt with issues related to England’s domestic and foreign commerce. The first administrative body to consider the affairs of all the American colonies, the Commission for Foreign Plantations, was established in 1634 (recommissioned 1636) and was chaired by Archbishop William Laud. The membership of these bodies was overwhelmingly aristocratic in composition, although merchants were sometimes called in to impart their expertise by serving on special subcommittees revolving around questions relating to colonial commerce.⁹

The English Civil War and Parliamentary government (1642-48)

Seismic political events in London in the early 1640s enabled a group of merchants to have direct access to the corridors of power and thereby exert influence over the formation of domestic, foreign, and colonial policy over the course of the next decade. A network of aristocrats, merchants, and clerics who sought further reformation of the Protestant religion played a prominent role in popular politics at a critical juncture in the early 1640s. The political polarisation generated by their mass petitioning

⁷ Ian K. Steele, *Politics of Colonial Policy: The Board of Trade in Colonial Administration, 1696-1720* (Oxford, 1968), p. xiii.

⁸ One example is the proprietary patent to the Caribbee Isles given to the Earl of Carlisle in 1627. Williamson, *Caribbee Islands under the Proprietary Patents*, ch. 2.

⁹ Andrews, *British Committees*, pp. 9-23.

campaigns and their mobilisation of the London crowd precipitated England's slide into Civil War. The role played by London merchants in popular politics in the early 1640s has been described comprehensively by Valerie Pearl and Robert Brenner, and therefore does not need repeating in detail here.¹⁰

Maurice Thomson and his associates, a group which Brenner has styled as 'new merchants', acted as an intermediary between puritan aristocrats in Parliament and the section of the populace who gave them their growing political power: the London crowd. According to Brenner's analysis, it was due to their social origins that these merchants were intimately connected with the shopkeepers, mariners, and artisans who made up the City's radical movement.¹¹ This enabled them to play a key role in organising demonstrations and delivering mass petitions which publicised the citizenry's grievances against the current administration.¹² It is notable that very few merchants with ties to Barbados were involved in the tumultuous political events of 1641-2. There are twelve merchants with business interests in Barbados who appear on Tai Liu's list of prominent London puritans: Marmaduke Rawdon, William Perkins, Nicholas Crispe, John Wood, Isaac Le Gay, Maurice Thomson, Martin Noell, Thomas Noell, James Noell, Thomas Andrews, Andrew Riccard, and Richard Ford.¹³ But only the American tobacco traders Craddock, Thomson, Vassall, and Pennoyer can be counted among those with business ties to the island who were highly active in London's popular politics during the early 1640s. And even then, these four merchants had far deeper connections with other Atlantic colonies such as Virginia, New England, and St. Christopher (Barbados, it will be remembered, was only of marginal interest to most of London's colonial traders in the 1630s and early 1640s due to the poor-quality tobacco grown there).

The merchants who assisted in the capture of the English state in 1642 tended to be those who were handed government offices in subsequent years due to the political influence it gave them within the new

¹⁰ Valerie Pearl, *London and the Outbreak of the Puritan Revolution: City government and national politics, 1625-43* (Oxford, 1961); Brenner, *Merchants and Revolution*.

¹¹ Brenner, *Merchants and Revolution*, p. 395.

¹² *Ibid.*, pp. 312-314, 324-325, 337-338, 340-341, 362-373.

¹³ Liu, *Puritan London*, Appendix B.

regime.¹⁴ As we have seen in Chapters Two and Three, over the course of the 1640s there were new opportunities for merchants in London to accumulate wealth by profiteering from civil war and investing in the Barbados sugar boom. But because merchants with links to Barbados were not heavily involved in the events of 1641-2, and appointment to government offices was largely determined through personal connections within the Parliamentary administration, merchant investors in the sugar boom could not easily access the corridors of power until after the demise of the Commonwealth in 1653. This was despite the increasing wealth of merchants like Martin Noell, who were funnelling the profits of civil war into sugar plantations and African slavery on Barbados.

The institutions charged with oversight of the American colonies experienced changes in form and personnel in the 1640s. Parliament declared in November 1643, without the King's assent, that it was assuming responsibility over the colonies, and passed an ordinance instituting a new commission for the 'Government of the Plantations in the West Indies'. The Earl of Warwick was at the head of this administrative body, receiving the title of 'governor in chief and lord high admiral' of the American plantations, while 18 further members were chosen out of MPs currently sitting in the House of Commons. Several of Warwick's associates in the Providence Island colonising scheme were selected to serve on the commission, including the Earl of Manchester, Lord Saye and Sele, Sir Gilbert Gerrard, Cornelius Holland, and John Pym. But only one merchant, Samuel Vassall (who was also an MP), was among those appointed. It appears the overriding concern was to have MPs sympathetic to the agenda of radical Parliamentarians heavily represented, which accounts for why men with no prior involvement in the affairs of the American colonies constituted more than half of those sitting on the new commission.¹⁵

Because the attention of its members was firmly focused on the Civil War the Warwick Commission did not exercise the full extent of its powers over the American plantations during its four-year tenure.¹⁶ This

¹⁴ Brenner, *Merchants and Revolution*, p. 389, 428-435.

¹⁵ For the powers accorded to the Warwick Commission, see *Acts and Ordinances*, Vol. 1., pp. 331-333 and *Proceedings and Debates*, pp. 147-150. See also Andrews, *British Committees*, p. 23; Bliss, *Revolution and Empire*, p. 49.

¹⁶ The Warwick Commission did intervene in some issues: it submitted commissions to various colonies ordering them to recognise Parliament's authority, and corresponded with colonial governors. For the commissions see, NRS, Hay Papers, GD34/924/34, The Earl of Warwick to the Governor and Council of Barbados, 27 March 1646. For the letters, see BL, Stowe Ms. 184, ff. 123-127.

has led historians to conclude that colonies such as Barbados enjoyed virtual independence from the mother country during the 1640s, deciding to trade instead with the Dutch.¹⁷ But this argument, which reveals a tendency among historians to interpret earlier periods of colonial revolt in the light of later events occurring in 1776, is not compatible with the evidence presented in the previous two chapters of this dissertation. While the religious radicals and members of the landed gentry who served on the Warwick Commission may have been distracted from colonial affairs because of the domestic conflict, the City of London's merchant community was not. English merchants escalated their commercial involvement with Barbados between 1643 and 1649. It is therefore difficult to accept that the inhabitants of Barbados were entirely free from metropolitan influence at the same time as planters were becoming heavily reliant on the London credit market to purchase land, machinery, and enslaved Africans. Barbadians may have enjoyed increased political autonomy in the 1640s, but this did not cause them to sever their commercial ties to the mother country and trade primarily with Dutch merchants.

The Commonwealth (1649-53)

The regicide and the establishment of the Commonwealth of England in 1649 were ushered in by a broad alliance of radicals in the New Model Army, the Rump Parliament, and the City.¹⁸ As the faction in the London merchant community most sympathetic to the new republic's political agenda, it should come as no surprise that Maurice Thomson and his associates were among those regularly selected to serve on committees related to the militia, navy, and finance between 1649 and 1653. Indeed, Brenner has argued that it was under the Commonwealth that these 'new merchants' reached their political ascendancy and

¹⁷ For examples, see J. H. Bennett, 'The English Caribbees in the Period of the Civil War, 1642-1646', *The William and Mary Quarterly*, Vol. 24, No. 3 (1967), p. 373; Bridenbaugh, *No Peace Beyond the Line*, p. 159; Puckrein, *Little England*, ch. 6.

¹⁸ Brenner, *Merchants and Revolution*, p. 558.

implemented legislation to suit their private business interests, which over the course of the 1640s had now also become commercial concerns borne by the entire nation.¹⁹

The effective governance of England's commerce was an issue of special significance to the Commonwealth. Rapid economic and commercial expansion in the second half of the 1640s, in large part because of the demands of civil war and the wealth generated from slave-grown sugar on Barbados, had led supporters of the new republican regime to extol the benefits of a political economy based principally around commercial wealth.²⁰ Commonwealth polemicists firmly believed that England's national strength could be enhanced if the country was governed as a commercial society, and as such they advocated for the development of banking institutions and praised the virtues of an increasingly influential merchant class.²¹ Accordingly, there were two organisations formed by the Commonwealth government which were given powers to oversee trade and the American plantations. The first was the Council of State, which was appointed by an act of the Rump Parliament in February 1649 to replace the Privy Council. The Council of State underwent yearly changes in membership, although for the most part it was dominated by MPs and army grandees.²² Most important for our purposes is that it superseded the Warwick Commission and assumed executive control over colonial policy-making.²³ The Council of State formed temporary committees and consulted specialists when they were answering petitions and formulating legislation relating to trade and the American plantations.²⁴ More often than not, these experts came from

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, pp. 550-557 & ch. 12.

²⁰ According to Steve Pincus, apologists for the Commonwealth such as Marchamont Nedham learned from the recent example of the Dutch Republic, along also from Classical and Renaissance texts, that a dynamic commerce was the source of national strength and wealth. Steve Pincus, 'Neither Machiavellian Moment nor Possessive Individualism: Commercial Society and the Defenders of the English Commonwealth', *The American Historical Review*, Vol. 103, No. 3 (1998), pp. 705-736.

²¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 720-721.

²² Out of the 41 members nominated to form the first Council of State in February 1650, 34 were MPs. Out of the 7 remaining members 5 were peers, and the regicide John Bradshaw and the judge John Rolle made up the full membership. Other than a few MPs with merchant backgrounds, merchants were hardly represented on the Council of State. See Worden, *Rump Parliament*, pp. 177-178; David L. Smith, 'The Struggle for New Constitutional and Institutional Forms', in John Morrill, ed., *Revolution and Restoration: England in the 1650s* (London, 1992), pp. 16-19; Michael Lynch, *The Interregnum, 1649-60* (London, 1994), p. 16; Sean Kelsey, 'The Foundation of the Council of State', in Kyle and Peacey, eds, *Parliament at Work*, pp. 129-148. For the legislation which created the Council of State, see *Acts and Ordinances*, Vol. 2, pp. 2-5, 'An Act of this present Parliament for Constituting a Counsell of State for the Comonwealth of England', 13 February 1648/49.

²³ Seven men who sat on the Warwick Commission also served on the Council of State when it was formed: the Earl of Pembroke, Sir Henry Vane the younger, Sir Arthur Heselrige, Oliver Cromwell, Dennis Bond, Miles Corbet, and Cornelius Holland. Andrews, *British Committees*, p. 23.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 30-36.

the London merchant community, and especially those in the City who shared the regime's radical political agenda. In 1650, for example, Maurice Thomson and his associates were invited to assist the state in formulating its response to the royalist rebellions in the American colonies.²⁵ This informal system for governing trade and empire gave London merchants who possessed personal connections with the Commonwealth government more power than ever before over policy-making.

A Council of Trade was formed in August 1650, which although a short-lived organisation and not an executive body, was a crucial instrument through which England's commercial fortunes at home and abroad were restored after nearly a decade of civil war. The fifteen-man council was purposefully designed to represent the diverse commercial interests of the new republic. Traders whom Brenner would describe as 'new merchants' were certainly a powerful voice within this organisation, but there is little evidence to support Brenner's argument that the committee was wholly devoted to furthering the interlocking agenda of this mercantile elite.²⁶ The 12 directives issued to the Council of Trade when it was created in August 1650 reveals that a wide range of commercial topics fell under the purview of the committee, including the manufacture and distribution of domestic trade goods, coinage, the value of customs placed on imported and exported commodities, and freedom of trade. The last provision, which instructed the Council of Trade to consider 'the English Plantations in America...and to advise how those Plantations may be best managed', was never implemented in practice.²⁷ As we have already seen, it

²⁵ TNA, SP 25/123, f. 228; Leng, *Benjamin Worsley*, pp. 49-58.

²⁶ Only three 'new merchant' traders to the Americas, Levant, and East Indies served on the Council of Trade during its short lifespan. They were Maurice Thomson, Thomas Boone, and John Fowke. Of these men, only Thomson had invested in the Barbados sugar boom of the 1640s. The rest of the fifteen-man committee possessed expertise in various other commercial matters relevant to the whole of England, such as the cloth trade and coinage. J. P. Cooper, 'Social and Economic Policies under the Commonwealth', in G. E. Aylmer, ed., *The Interregnum: The Quest for Settlement, 1646-1660* (London, 1972), pp. 131-138; Leng, *Benjamin Worsley*, pp. 60-61. Moreover, the idea to form a standing committee to administer England's commerce did not originate with men like Maurice Thomson. Authors advocating for better governance of England's trade had been circulating proposals for such an administrative body in pamphlets since the early 1640s. For examples, see Lewes Roberts, *The treasure of trafficke, or a discourse of forraigne trade* (London, 1641); Henry Robinson, *England's safetie in trade's encrease* (London, 1641).

²⁷ *Acts and Ordinances* Vol. 2, pp. 403-406, 'An Act for the Advancing and Regulating of the Trade of this Commonwealth', 1 August 1650; Leng, *Benjamin Worsley*, pp. 62-63.

was generally left to the Council of State to formulate colonial policy, and besides, for most of the seventeen-month lifespan of the Council of Trade the plantations were still in rebellion.²⁸

The most important matter for the Commonwealth to resolve regarding the American colonies were the royalist rebellions which had broken out in Virginia, Barbados, Antigua, and Bermuda after word had spread about the execution of Charles I. Conversations between leading members of the London merchant community and Benjamin Worsley - a polymath, civil servant, and secretary to the Council of Trade - played an integral part in the formulation of the Commonwealth's strategy for reducing the rebellious plantations. In January 1650, for example, Maurice Thomson, William Pennoyer, and William Allen, along also with their associate Benjamin Worsley, were called before the Council of State's Admiralty Committee to offer formal guidance to the government on the reduction of Virginia.²⁹ The role played by London merchants in formulating the Commonwealth's strategy for reducing Barbados will be explored in detail in the next section of this chapter.

On 3 October 1650, 'An Act for Prohibiting Trade with the Barbadoes, Virginia, Bermuda, and Antego' was signed into law by Parliament. This piece of legislation, known to historians as the Plantation Act, was intended primarily to facilitate the reduction of the recalcitrant plantations by restricting access to their main source of income, but it also contained several other provisions which had wider ramifications for the future administration of the English empire. First and foremost, the act dictated that inhabitants of the disobedient colonies were 'not to be permitted any manner of Commerce or Traffique with any people whatsoever'. For the duration of the embargo, any merchant vessels originating from England which did not have a license from the Council of State to voyage to Barbados, Virginia, Bermuda, or Antigua could be lawfully seized. Moreover, foreign ships were now required to obtain a license to trade with *any* of the English plantations in America, not just those which were in rebellion. If caught conducting trade without express permission from the English state, foreign vessels were to be brought

²⁸ Andrews, *British Committees*, pp. 30-36; Leng, *Benjamin Worsley*, pp. 62-63. For a detailed analysis of the commercial matters debated, and rulings issued, by the Council of Trade, see Andrews, *British Committees*, pp. 24-30; Cooper, 'Social and Economic Policies under the Commonwealth', pp. 131-138; Leng, *Benjamin Worsley*, pp. 64-70, 73-79.

²⁹ Leng, *Benjamin Worsley*, pp. 49-58.

into a port belonging to the Commonwealth, and have legal proceedings initiated against the owners in the Admiralty Court. The final provision revoked the proprietary patents given by the King to aristocrats such as the Earl of Carlisle, and gave the Council of State the authority to install their own allies from England as colonial governors.³⁰

The provisions contained within the 1650 Plantation Act were more significant for the colonies than the first Navigation Act, which would be passed the following year. This is because the Plantation Act was more sweeping in its measures and had the potential to transform the pre-existing relationship between centre and periphery in the English empire. It signified the Commonwealth's intention to govern the American colonies directly and implement new commercial policies beneficial for the English state and its merchant supporters. As Carla Pestana notes, 'this decision inaugurated a new era, creating for the first time the prospect of a centralized administration of all colonies'.³¹ But it is important to remember that the ability to implement this ambitious imperial programme was well beyond the reach of the English state at this time.

The following year the Commonwealth government hurried another piece of legislation through Parliament which outlined its mercantilist vision for the governance of England's commerce. The first Navigation Act, as it is commonly known, was ratified on 9 October 1651. It contained several clauses which built upon the provisions relating to foreign trade within precedent statutes such as the Plantation Act. The Navigation Act specified how commodities produced in Asia, Africa, and America could only be imported into England and her colonies in vessels owned and manned by Englishmen. Licenses permitting foreign shipowners to conduct commerce with the American colonies would no longer be offered by the Council of State. Regulations were slightly less stringent for European commodities, which could be imported into England and the colonies either in English ships or in vessels owned by the country in which the goods were produced.³² The overall intention was to increase the nation's wealth by

³⁰ TNA, CO 1/12, ff. 88-92. The October 1650 Plantation Act is also published in *Acts and Ordinances*, Vol. 2., pp. 425-429.

³¹ Pestana, *English Atlantic in an Age of Revolution*, p. 100.

³² *Acts and Ordinances*, Vol. 2., pp. 559-562, 'An Act for increase of Shipping, and Encouragement of the Navigation of this Nation', 9 October 1651.

promoting English shipping and protecting it from mounting Dutch competition. Though the passage of the Navigation Act demonstrates that the English state was taking an increased interest in exerting direct control over commerce, it was generally unable to enforce the dictates of this restrictive legislation in the colonies and effectively combat inter-imperial trade, which continued unabated.³³

As a foundational ordinance in the history of the British Empire, there has been considerable interest among historians in identifying who authored the Navigation Act. Taking J. E. Farnell's analysis as his point of departure, Brenner has reasoned that his 'new merchants' were some of the act's main proponents because it accomplished their long-term goals of limiting foreign access to English markets and making London the entrepot of Western European trade.³⁴ I am more inclined to agree with the argument made by Robert Bliss, however, that the Navigation Act cannot be interpreted as a piece of interest-group legislation secured by interloping merchants. The act was a response to general agitation among English merchants dating back several years that something needed to be done to revive England's trade and stymie Dutch commercial competition.³⁵ In *The Advocate*, a pamphlet justifying the Commonwealth's decision to sanction the Navigation Act, Benjamin Worsley emphasised how the Dutch maintained a competitive advantage over English merchants in all theatres of overseas trade, and that the English government was therefore adopting Dutch strategies to promote shipping.³⁶ As the pamphlet demonstrates, politicians, bureaucrats, and diplomats in the Commonwealth government had also come to share the anti-Dutch outlook espoused by most English merchants. This was partially because they also recognised the importance of commercial power in maintaining national strength; but was more immediately due to the humiliating fashion in which negotiations to form a Protestant union with the United Provinces had broken down in 1651.³⁷ It was contingent and short-term political circumstances

³³ For transnational trade at Barbados in the 1640s and 1650s see Chapter Five of this dissertation and Koot, *Empire at the Periphery*.

³⁴ Farnell, 'The Navigation Act'; Brenner, *Merchants and Revolution*, pp. 625-628.

³⁵ Bliss, *Revolution and Empire*, p. 58. There does not seem to have been coherent support for the Navigation Act among all English merchants, however, as evidenced by the several complaints penned by merchants who disliked certain provisions. The Merchant Adventurers, who were reliant on Dutch shipping, would probably have been less than pleased about the new and restrictive regulations. Leng, *Benjamin Worsley*, p. 75

³⁶ Philopatris [Benjamin Worsley], *The Advocate* (London, 1652).

³⁷ For a summary of the Commonwealth's diplomatic mission to the Hague to propose the formation of an Anglo-Dutch political union in 1651, see Steve Pincus, *Protestantism and Patriotism: Ideologies and the Making of English Foreign Policy, 1650-1668* (Cambridge, 1996), pp. 11-12 & ch. 3.

which caused the Commonwealth to take an especially assertive approach to the longstanding issue of Dutch commercial competition. This aggressive commercial stance would have significant repercussions, because it was a primary cause of the first Anglo-Dutch war (1652-54).

We have seen how merchants who had been highly active in London's popular politics in the 1640s were incorporated into the Commonwealth government between 1649 and 1653. While Brenner is correct that merchants such as Maurice Thomson were at their most influential under the Commonwealth, he does exaggerate the power they exerted over the formulation of national commercial policy.³⁸ Blair Worden's argument that 'the Rump worked closely with merchants who were prepared to assist it, but negotiations were conducted strictly on the government's terms', is broadly correct, and explains why trading companies were not stripped of their monopoly privileges by the new republic.³⁹ But it is nonetheless crucial to emphasise that the Commonwealth was collaborating more closely with merchants than any prior English government. This was an important departure, and was a trend which would continue into the Protectorate and Restoration.

The Protectorate (1653-1659)

England's experiment with republican government under the Commonwealth came to an abrupt halt in the spring of 1653 when Cromwell stormed into the House of Commons with armed guards and forcefully disbanded the Rump Parliament. This allowed Cromwell, as the most powerful officer in the army, to assume executive power as Lord Protector of the entire nation later that year.⁴⁰ A petition demanding the recall of the Rump was signed by 40 London citizens, who were mostly political independents, and presented to Oliver Cromwell by the alderman and merchant Thomas Andrews on 21

³⁸ Brenner, *Merchants and Revolution*, ch. 12.

³⁹ Worden, *Rump Parliament*, p. 258.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 335; Austin Woolrych, *Commonwealth to Protectorate* (Oxford, 1982).

May 1653. Several merchants who had enjoyed a privileged position under the Commonwealth and had benefitted from its commercial policies, including Maurice Thomson, his brothers William and Robert, William Pennoyer, and Michael Davison, were among the signatories. Cromwell summarily ignored the petition, demonstrating how it was the army and its prominent officers who were the most significant powerbrokers in English politics at this critical juncture. According to William Clarke, Cromwell 'took it ill that they should goe about to obstruct the proceedings for the good of the people, that himself and those about him (turning to the officers) would make good what was done with their bloods &c'.⁴¹ In retaliation to this affront, the Rump debated excluding disaffected persons from the government on 30 May, and shortly after Cromwell abruptly dismissed all those who had subscribed to the petition from public office. Maurice Thomson, for instance, was disbarred from his position as a commissioner of the navy and customs. Though most remained significant figures in the City's mercantile community and were ultimately allowed to continue occupying positions of power, the ability of Thomson and his close associates to command the attention of the Lord Protector and influence the formation of policy was strictly limited for the remainder of the Interregnum.⁴²

The disjuncture which occurred with the demise of the Commonwealth government allowed an increasingly wealthy and prestigious network of London merchants, most of whom had invested in the sugar boom, to become more involved in government and exert political influence themselves. This group was not nearly as cohesive as Brenner's 'new merchants', nor from what I can tell was it as deeply involved in the City's popular politics. But even though these merchants were not a unified group with a clear set of shared beliefs and aims, what linked them was a shared background in Barbados sugar. It was the profits generated from sugar and slavery which propelled several merchants to ascendancy in the City in the 1650s, a position which they retained until the mid-1660s.

There are several reasons why London merchants who had invested in Barbados sugar in the 1640s came to occupy prominent positions in government offices and the directorate of overseas trading companies

⁴¹ Sir William Clarke, ed., *The Clarke Papers. Selections from the Papers of William Clarke*, Vol. 3 (London, 1899), p. 6.

⁴² Brenner, *Merchants and Revolution*, pp. 635-637; Worden, *Rump Parliament* p. 310.

in the 1650s and early 1660s. The disposition of Cromwell, the nation's Lord Protector and head-of-state between 1653 and 1658, was significant. As has already been noted, the group of merchants with most influence under the previous Commonwealth administration (Maurice Thomson and his associates) had fallen into short-term disfavour with Cromwell in May 1653 due to their support for a petition imploring the restoration of the Rump Parliament. This provided an opportunity for a different set of merchants to step in, command Cromwell's attention, and thereby influence government policy.

These other merchants were those with Caribbean business interests, and in particular men who had financed the Barbados sugar boom and were connected with its leading investor, Martin Noell, who had succeeded Maurice Thomson as the most politically powerful merchant in the City of London by the mid-1650s. Noell was personally associated with Cromwell through prominent figures in the Protectorate government. His brother-in-law was the secretary of state John Thurloe, and he had been engaged in sugar trading ventures to Barbados and Montserrat with Cromwell's personal secretary Robert Spavin.⁴³ Also crucial was how in the mid-1650s the Lord Protector himself developed an obsession with what he perceived as a providential mission to conquer Spanish America. It is unsurprising, therefore, that he began to surround himself with those in London most knowledgeable about the Caribbean: merchants and planters with financial interests in Barbados. The clearest manifestation of Cromwell's preoccupation with the Caribbean was the Western Design, which as we will see shortly Noell and his associates helped to organise and provision.

There were other long-term transformations which help to explain why merchants with investments in Barbados rose to a position of ascendancy in London's merchant community and were increasingly represented in the councils and committees formed to administer England's colonies. Most important was how merchants who had invested in the Barbados sugar boom were generating massive wealth. This had a twofold impact. First, it increased the amount of liquid capital available to these merchants for use in moneylending, government contracting, and investing in joint-stock companies. A new English political

⁴³ Aylmer, *State's Servants*, pp. 263-264; Brenner, *Merchants and Revolution*, p. 522.

economy, which first emerged under the Commonwealth, stressed the importance of national ‘improvement’ as a means of achieving economic advancement and the betterment of the human condition. Wealth created through commerce was therefore deemed to be central to the national interest.⁴⁴ The rapid economic development seen on Barbados in the 1640s and 1650s epitomised the ideal of ‘improvement’ which members of the Hartlib Circle and successive Interregnum regimes valued so highly. For instance, the riches accumulated by Caribbean planters was admired by Samuel Hartlib, who noted in 1655 that ‘Col. Drakes [Drax] of Hackney hath a Plantation in Barbados which yeelds him yearly 10 or 8 thousand lbs [pounds sterling]’.⁴⁵ Moreover, Richard Ligon’s *True and Exact History of Barbados* (completed in 1653, first published in 1657) is a text thoroughly influenced by mid-seventeenth-century ideas about ‘improvement’, and functions partly as a practical business manual for instructing readers in how they could get rich by speculating in the Barbadian sugar industry.⁴⁶ Because the merchant investors in Barbados had rapidly made money through sugar, slavery, and overseas trade they typified this new political economy, and some of them were therefore incorporated into the Protectorate and Restoration governments to impart their expertise on the most effective means of governing colonies and trade.

Second, the newfound prosperity of those who had invested in the sugar boom vastly improved their reputations. By 1650 Barbados was England’s most financially successful colony. The private wealth created on Barbados and the growing importance of sugar to the state’s customs revenue was lauded in the 1650s and 1660s. Perhaps the best example of the work this did to improve reputations is how several planters and merchants who had made fortunes on Barbados were knighted by both Cromwell and Charles I: Richard Peers, James Drax in 1658 (knighted again by Charles II in 1660), Andrew Riccard in 1660, John Colleton in 1661 (and his son Peter, also a Barbados plantation-owner), Martin Noell in 1662 (and his son James, who had lived on Barbados, in 1665), Peter Lear, Christopher Codrington, John

⁴⁴ Pincus, ‘Neither Machiavellian Moment’; Slack, *Invention of Improvement*, pp. 91-128.

⁴⁵ Hartlib Papers, Ephemerides 1655 Part 2, 29/5/15A-28B.

⁴⁶ David Chan Smith, ‘Useful Knowledge, Improvement, and the Logic of Capital in Richard Ligon’s True and Exact History of Barbados’, *Journal of the History of Ideas*, Vol. 78, No. 4. (2017), pp. 549-570.

Yeamans, and Thomas Modyford who was made a baronet in 1664.⁴⁷ Of course, the wealth generated on Barbados is not the only reason why these men were knighted and made baronets: several of them were longstanding royalists and some lent money to the Crown soon after the Restoration. But the prestige enjoyed by Barbados merchants and planters in London is part of the explanation behind their knighthoods and repeated appointments to government office in the late 1650s and early 1660s.

The structure of the Protectorate government was laid out in a new written constitution called *The Instrument of Government* (1653). Under the new constitution the personality and statesmanship of the Lord Protector was fundamental to the governance of the nation. It was proximity to and personal connections with Cromwell and his council which gave merchants access to government office and political power between 1653 and 1659.⁴⁸ Much like how experts from outside of the House of Commons had been appointed to Parliamentary committees in prior years, the Protector's Council often consulted with external specialists when drafting legislation.⁴⁹ When it came to trade and colonial affairs London merchants and planters with investments in Barbados were often called upon to impart knowledge and offer advice. In February 1656, for example, Martin Noell, James Drax, William Williams, Luke Lucie, Thomas Kendall, and Anthony Hooper represented the interests of the 'Barbados Merchants' during a meeting at Grocer's Hall in London to discuss the 'preserving of the trade of this nation and securing of Merchants ships and goods'.⁵⁰ But, for the most part, the standing committees formed to govern trade and plantations under the Protectorate were large, unwieldy, and inefficient. A Trade Committee made up of seventy members was established in November 1655, which drafted reports for consideration by the

⁴⁷ For Richard Peers see *Barbados Council Minutes*, p. 84; E. M. Shilstone, 'The Thirteen Baronets', *Journal of the Barbados Museum and Historical Society*, Vol. 2 (1934-1935), pp. 89-92; Dunn, *Sugar and Slaves*, p. 81. For Drax see, *CCMEIC*, Vol. 5., p. 197; Aylmer, 'Sir Martin Noell', *ODNB*; Venning, 'Sir Andrew Riccard', *ODNB*; Nuala Zahedieh, 'Modyford, Sir Thomas, first baronet (c. 1620-1679), planter and colonial governor', *ODNB* (23 September 2004), <https://www.oxforddnb.com/view/10.1093/ref:odnb/9780198614128.001.0001/odnb-9780198614128-e-18871> (Accessed 8 November 2019); George W. Marshall, ed., *Le Neve's pedigrees of the knights made by King Charles II., King James II., King William III. and Queen Mary, King William alone, and Queen Anne* (London, 1873), pp. 76-77, 90, 160-161. For Colleton, see Buchanan, 'The Colleton Family', p. 44.

⁴⁸ Ivan Roots, 'Cromwell's Ordinances: The Early Legislation of the Protectorate', in G. E. Aylmer, ed., *The Interregnum: The Quest for Settlement, 1646-1660* (London, 1972), p. 144; Woolrych, *Commonwealth to Protectorate*, p. 3, 368-369; Smith 'The Struggle for New Constitutional and Institutional Forms', pp. 21-23.

⁴⁹ Roots, 'Cromwell's Ordinances', p. 148; Aylmer, *State's Servants*, pp. 45-54.

⁵⁰ TNA, SP 25/76, ff. 564-566.

Protector's Council.⁵¹ For the plantations, various committees with overlapping jurisdictions including the Committee for Jamaica and the Committee for America made drafting colonial policy an incoherent and cumbersome procedure.⁵²

Due to the ineffective management of trade and the colonies under the Protectorate, two merchants whose overseas business interests revolved around the Barbadian sugar economy, Martin Noell and Thomas Povey, began to present reports to Cromwell about reorganising the central administration of the Caribbean colonies. Centralising power over the supervision of England's Caribbean colonies so that merchants could govern them in a way which suited their investments was a feature common to all these proposals, and therefore appears to have been of paramount importance to some of London's leading investors in the Barbados sugar boom.

The first proposal penned by Povey and Noell was an 'Overture for the regulating the Affaires of his Highnesse in the West Indies' (1654), which argued for the creation of a seven-man standing council with extensive powers over England's sugar islands.⁵³ Their proposed West India Council would be subordinate only to the Protector, and thus establish a more uniform and ordered colonial administration. It would be empowered to distribute public justice in the Caribbean, receive and draft all official correspondence between Westminster and the colonies, debate how to improve England's trade, and be in a better position to enforce the dictates of the Navigation Act in the Caribbean colonies by 'shutting out all strangers from that Trade'. The composition of the council had been carefully thought out. A small number of members were considered the most expedient way to deal with colonial affairs and

⁵¹ Martin Noell, Andrew Riccard, Maurice Thomson, 'Mr Legay of Southampton', and Henry Hatsell are the only members of the committee with any identifiable links to Barbados. It seems the intention, like with the Commonwealth's Council of Trade, was to have all the commercial interests of the nation represented. TNA, SP 18/101 f. 179; Andrews, *British Committees*, pp. 36-43.

⁵² Five people constituted a quorum on the Committee for America. Thomas Povey served as the secretary of the committee, while Noell was also a prominent member who regularly attended meetings and was a powerful voice. The other three men who most commonly served on the committee were Tobias Bridges (later commander of the West India regiment), Stephen Winthrop (the son of the New England puritan John Winthrop and former Barbados tobacco planter), Richard Sydenham, and Robert Bowes (both commissioners for Jamaica). Andrews, *British Committees*, pp. 43-48; BL, Egerton Ms. 2395, ff. 157-159.

⁵³ BL, Add. Ms. 11411, ff. 11-12, 'An Essaie or Overture for the regulating the Affaires of his Highnesse in the West Indies', [c. 1654].

ensure the secrecy of their plans. Especially significant was how the council purposefully designed not to be dominated by merchants, but carefully balanced among those of 'different professions and qualificacons'.⁵⁴ Though it is nonetheless evident that Noell and Povey's 'overtures' clearly favoured London merchants and other metropolitan interests, as there was no room on their projected council for a representative of colonists in the English Caribbean. For the time being these detailed plans were ignored by Cromwell. But immediately after the Restoration the 1654 'overtures' were amended by Povey and reproduced almost word for word as the instructions which created the Council of Foreign Plantations in 1660.⁵⁵

The best example of the role played by merchant investors in the sugar boom in directing West India policy during the Protectorate was their heavy representation on the committees for the Western Design. With the conclusion of the Anglo-Dutch war in April 1654, which ended in victory for England, over a decade of warfare had resulted in the creation of a professional standing army and naval build-up. The expense required to maintain such a large military force meant that it would either have to be disbanded or dispatched overseas to wage a war of aggression against England's enemies. Just five days after the Treaty of Westminster was signed, formally ending conflict with the United Provinces, this topic was debated at length in a meeting of the Protector's Council. As longstanding religious rivals, Catholic France and Spain were perceived to be appropriate targets. Consultation with two ship's captains named Henry Hatsell and William Limbrey, both of whom had lived in Hispaniola, confirmed that the thinly defended but mineral rich islands of the Spanish Caribbean were the best option. Cromwell defended this decision at a further meeting of his council convened in July, where he argued that 'this designe would cost little more then laying by the shippes, and that with hope of greate profitt'. Religious considerations were also at the forefront of these discussions, because Cromwell firmly believed it was his providential mission to advance 'the Protestants' cause' in America.⁵⁶ According to David L. Smith, spiritual

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*

⁵⁵ Andrews, *British Committees*, pp. 68-70. For the other proposals about reforming the central administration of the Caribbean colonies, which were penned by Povey and Noell in the second half of the 1650s, see BL, Egerton Ms. 2395, ff. 99-100.

⁵⁶ Clarke, ed., *The Clarke Papers*, Vol. 3, Appendix B, 'Edward Monatgu's notes on the debates in the Protector's Council concerning the last Indian expedition'.

geopolitics underpinned Cromwell's decision to pursue a programme of Protestant imperialism in the Caribbean.⁵⁷ Cromwell had been heavily influenced by Thomas Gage, whose recent publication *The English-American, his travail by Sea and Land* (1648) emphasised the atrocities inflicted upon indigenous populations in the Americas by Spanish Catholics, and appealed to godly Englishmen to attack this sinful and corrupt empire.⁵⁸

It is doubtful that everybody in London's merchant community was pleased with the decision to attack the Spanish Empire: those English merchants who traded to the Iberian Peninsula and the Mediterranean would almost certainly have anticipated that their profits would be severely dented by war with Spain. One group of London merchants does seem to have been enthused by the prospect of conquering the Spanish Caribbean, however, and due to their longstanding experience trading in the region were even appointed to help organise and execute the Design. By August 1654 an eight-man committee had been appointed to oversee the logistics of the amphibious invasion of Hispaniola.⁵⁹ Five of these committee members were leading merchant investors in the Barbados sugar boom during the 1640s: Martin Noell, Maurice Thomson, Andrew Riccard, William Williams, and William Vincent.⁶⁰ The other three, John Limbrey, Thomas Alderne, and William Rider, all had prior involvement in overseas trade to the Caribbean and connections within the Protectorate government.⁶¹ In subsequent months this committee,

⁵⁷ David L. Smith, 'The Western Design and the spiritual geopolitics of Cromwellian foreign policy', *Itinerario*, Vol. 40, No. 2 (2016), pp. 279-292. Cromwell's understanding that English merchants were being prevented from trading at Spanish colonies and had been subject to vicious Spanish reprisals due to their faith appears to have shaped his decision-making process, thus blurring the commercial and religious motivations behind the Design. It is also important to highlight the Western Design was part of a longer history of Puritan privateering and colonising schemes in the Caribbean, financed by aristocrats and merchants. Kupperman, 'Errand to the Indies'.

⁵⁸ Thomas Gage, *The English-American, his travail by sea and land, or, A new survey of the West-India's* (London, 1648).

⁵⁹ BL, Stowe MS 185, ff. 83-85, 'Instructions unto Generall Penn, Collonell Venables, Aldr Ricard, Collonell Haines, Mr Maurice Thomson, Capt John Lymberry, Capt William Rider, Capt Thomas Alderne, Mr William Williams, Capt Goodson, Mr William Vincent. Capt John Brookhaven and Mr Martin Noell, for managing the Southerne Expedicon', 18 August 1654.

⁶⁰ By now the involvement of most of these merchants with the Barbadian sugar economy should be familiar, as it has been described at length in Chapters 2 and 3. The only person who hasn't received as much treatment is the merchant William Vincent. Though primarily a Levant Company trader, William Vincent also co-owned the Friendship plantation on Barbados with his brother John (also a merchant) who lived on the island and managed their sugar works. See BDA, RB3/5, pp. 510-513.

⁶¹ John Limbrey was the brother of the ship captain William Limbrey, who traded to Spanish America and gave advice to the Protector's Council on the viability of Hispaniola as a military target. John Limbrey was most likely chosen to serve on the commission for the Western Design due to this family connection and because he had previously sat on a Commonwealth committee to provision the navy. Thomas Alderne was a trader to New England and the Caribbean, and was also the son-in-law of the colonial trader and regicide Owen Rowe. William Ryder was a Southwark-based sea captain who had served on the directorate of the East India Company's Second General

dominated as it was by merchants with a background in Barbados sugar, reported on the 'nature and quantity of victuals to be put on board the fleet', the number and types of weapons required for the invasion, selected William Penn and Robert Venables as the fleet's commanding officers, and nominated trustworthy commissioners on Barbados and several other English islands to assist the expedition when it reached the Caribbean. Predictably, many of the same merchants appointed to offer the government advice about the Western Design were also handed lucrative contracts to supply the naval force currently being prepared. Living up to his reputation as a prominent financier of the Protectorate regime, Martin Noell advanced £16,000 'at instance of the Protector and Council for two fleet and forces', demonstrating his willingness to support the scheme in both an advisory and financial capacity.⁶²

The Western Design and the passage of mercantilist legislation such as the Navigation Act underscores how the English state was becoming more actively involved in empire-building during the 1650s.⁶³ David Armitage has even suggested that the period from 1654 to 1656 was a distinctive 'imperial moment' in English history.⁶⁴ If this was indeed an 'imperial moment', then it was only a fleeting one. The inability of the invasion force to topple Spanish dominance in the Americas meant that the English state's interest in empire-building receded after 1656. It was generally left to private merchants with existing interests in the Caribbean to supply Jamaica, to the extent that a group of 19 merchants and seamen trading there were

Voyage in 1647, and had ties to Brenner's 'new merchant' leadership. See Brenner, *Merchants and Revolution*, p. 176, 179, 194, 517, 531, 554; Swingen, *Competing Visions of Empire*, p. 39.

⁶² For government contracts, see *Thurloe Papers*, Vol. 2., p. 542, 'Mr Andrew Riccard &c. to the protector', 14 August 1654; *Thurloe Papers*, Vol. 2., pp. 571-574, 'A list of the ships provisions, presented to his highness', [n.d. c. 1654-55]. For the Jamaica petition, see TNA, CO 1/25, f. 227; *Thurloe Papers*, Vol. 3., pp. 203-204, 'Commissioners for the southern expedition to the protector' and 'Provisions to be made for the West Indies', 7 March 1654/55. For the committee appointment of Penn and Venables, see Swingen, *Competing Visions of Empire*, p. 41. For Noell's loan, see Andrews, *British Committees*, p. 50.

⁶³ This is a contentious point of historiographical debate. Disagreement has centred on the long-term significance of the Western Design within the broader history of England's colonial expansion. Pestana, Swingen, and Donoghue argue that because the Western Design was a state-backed enterprise it marked an important departure from England's prior efforts at colonial expansion, the energy and funding for which was provided mostly by private associations of aristocrats and merchants. Pestana, *The English Conquest of Jamaica*, passim; Donoghue, *Fire Under the Ashes*, pp. 228-237; Swingen, *Competing Visions of Empire*, pp. 37-55. But Steve Pincus and L. H. Roper have downplayed the imperial significance of the Design. For Pincus, the Protestant foreign policy pursued by Cromwell was much more limited than territorial conquest, and was focused more instead on opening up commerce in the Caribbean to prevent the Habsburgs from 'monopolizing the resources necessary to gain a universal monarchy'. Whereas Roper interprets the Western Design as not being a state-backed imperial initiative, but more in line with earlier forms of colonial expansion orchestrated by private agents. See Steve Pincus, 'England and the World in the 1650s', in John Morrill, ed., *Revolution and Restoration: England in the 1650s* (London, 1992), pp. 141-142; Roper, *Advancing Empire*, pp. 154-157, 160.

⁶⁴ David Armitage, 'The Cromwellian Protectorate and the Languages of Empire', *The Historical Journal*, Vol. 35, No. 3 (1992), p. 533.

forced to petition the Protector's Council to implore the state to help in fortifying the recently seized colony and to appoint their delegate William Watts as governor.⁶⁵

The sugar wealth pouring in from Barbados, along also with the new colonial gains made in the Greater Antilles, persuaded some merchants with Caribbean business interests that the administration of the English islands in the Caribbean needed further reform. Projective plans for the formation of West India Company, which would have concentrated power over the governance of the Caribbean colonies into the hands of London merchants, were drawn up by Thomas Povey from 1658-59. Those with a background in the Barbados sugar trade were the chief backers of this scheme: Martin Noell, Francis Lord Willoughby (governor of Barbados for two terms, 1650-52 and 1660-1666), William Watts (a ship captain and merchant involved in Caribbean trade), and Povey himself. The failure of the state to conquer large swathes of the Spanish Caribbean through Cromwell's Western Design appears to have convinced these men that corporate forms of organisation, dominated by merchants rather than diverse and competing interests, were a better means of expediting the settlement of Jamaica, furthering public and private interests in the region, and 'checking the pride of the Spanyards'. Merchants who traded with Barbados had good reason to favour such an arrangement. Securing a trade monopoly through an Act of Parliament would protect them from commercial competition, while pooling their capital in a joint-stock promised to spread the risk of assaulting Spanish colonies in the region.⁶⁶ Thomas Povey was optimistic about the scheme when he wrote to Governor Daniel Searle of Barbados in October 1659, although he mused that 'this Designe (almost perfectly ripened) will bee disappointed or retarded by public troubles'.⁶⁷

⁶⁵ BL, Egerton Ms. 2395, f. 171, 'The Humble Peticon of diverse Merchants, Seamen and others trading into the West Indias', 24 April 1660. The petitioners included many investors in the Barbados sugar boom. The full list of signatories is: Martin Noell, Edward Bushell, William Birde, Thomas Rash, Robert Brooke, Alex Howe, Edward Barnard, Isaac Vivian, John Parker, Thomas Rodbard, Hugh Forth, D Skyimer, Henry Boyer, John Warner, John Harris, Henry Richards, John Blake, George Webber, John French.

⁶⁶ BL, Egerton Ms. 2395, ff. 87-89, 91-92, 103-110. The plan was for the state to lend the West India Company 20 frigates, which they would equip using £12,000 of capital raised through a joint-stock, and dispatch to attack the Spanish dominions in Florida and elsewhere in the Americas. The proposed West India Company would possess a monopoly over trade with any regions they conquered. The Dutch West India Company and the English East India Company (which as we will see in Chapter Five had recently seen an influx of Barbados merchants into its directorate) appear to have been the models which Noell and his associates drew upon when formulating their plans.

⁶⁷ BL, Egerton Ms. 2395, ff. 178-179, Thomas Povey to Daniel Searle, October 29 1659.

He was proved correct: it was the instability of domestic politics caused by the death of Oliver Cromwell and the brief return of the Commonwealth which scuppered plans to form a West India Company.

The Restoration (1660-1664)

With the return to power of the monarchy in May 1660 new administrative bodies to oversee England's trade and colonies were created. A Privy Council committee was appointed on 4 July 1660 to consider these matters. Despite being made up of mostly aristocrats and other powerful statesmen within the new government, the committee sat irregularly during its fifteen-year lifespan, and the only issue of importance it dealt with before the mid-1660s was whether to void the Carlisle patent over the Caribbee Isles.⁶⁸ Two advisory bodies were formed in December 1660 to sound out the opinion of London merchants on the topics of trade and plantations.⁶⁹ A Council of Trade, consisting of 62 members, sat semi-regularly between 1660 and 1664. It was designed to represent the opinions of the entire merchant community, but this meant that, like many of its predecessors, it was too large to be effective.⁷⁰

More interesting for our purposes is the Council of Foreign Plantations, which met in Grocer's Hall and was composed of 49 unsalaried commissioners. It was most active between 1660 and 1664, and as has already been mentioned its instructions were closely based upon Thomas Povey's 1654 overtures agitating for the formation of a West India Council.⁷¹ When compared with earlier committees and councils

⁶⁸ APCC, no. 484, p. 295; Andrews, *British Committees*, pp. 61-64; A. P. Thornton, *West-India Policy Under the Restoration* (Oxford, 1956), pp. 5-6, 12. The Privy Council Committee was made up of ten members. Many of these men had prior involvement with the American plantations, but only Anthony Ashley Cooper had invested in the Barbados sugar boom (having purchased a plantation there in 1646).

⁶⁹ Steele, *Politics of Colonial Policy*, p. 4.

⁷⁰ There were nine men with business ties to Barbados sitting on the Council of Trade: Francis Lord Willoughby of Parham, Sir Anthony Ashley Cooper, Sir Andrew Riccard, Sir James Drax, Thomas Povey, Martin Noell, William Williams, Thomas Kendall, and John Colleton. 'Councils of trade 1660-72', in J. C. Sainty, *Office-Holders in Modern Britain: Volume 3, Officials of the Boards of Trade 1660-1870* (London, 1974), pp. 18-19. British History Online <http://www.british-history.ac.uk/office-holders/vol3/pp20-22> (Accessed 31 May 2019). See also Andrews, *British Committees*, pp. 64-68; Thornton, *West-India Policy*, pp. 8-10; Brian Weiser, *Charles II and the Politics of Access* (Woodbridge, 2003), pp. 137-146.

⁷¹ Andrews, *British Committees*, pp. 68-74.

formed to govern colonial affairs (such as the Warwick Commission convened in the 1640s, for example), it is clear that the representation of merchants had increased markedly at the expense of MPs. The number of men with Barbados business ties appointed to the Council of Foreign Plantations far outnumbered that for any other American colony. There were thirteen Barbadian experts selected: Francis Lord Willoughby, Sir Anthony Ashley Cooper, William Willoughby, Sir Peter Lear, Sir Andrew Riccard, Sir James Drax, Thomas Povey, John Colleton, Edward Walrond, Martin Noell, William Williams, Thomas Kendall, and Thomas Middleton.⁷²

The Council of Foreign Plantations' large membership conceals the extent to which merchants with financial ties to Barbados dominated its day-to-day affairs, especially when the topic of debate was related to the formation of West India policy. Laxity in enforcing rules regarding attending Parliamentary committees and councils and the small number of attendees needed to constitute a quorum sometimes enabled certain lobby groups to exert disproportionate influence over proceedings.⁷³ When the Council of Foreign Plantations first met on the 7 January 1661, for example, the Barbadian plantation-owner Sir Anthony Ashley Cooper was the only Privy Councillor and politician present. Almost all others who attended had Caribbean interests, and most were merchants with investments in Barbados: Sir James Drax, Sir John Colleton, Sir Peter Lear, Martin Noell, Thomas Povey, Thomas Kendall, and Thomas Middleton.⁷⁴

⁷² Several others who had Caribbean business interests, but not specifically ties to Barbados, were appointed to the Council of Foreign Plantations: Capt. John Limbrey, Capt. William Watts, and Capt. Alexander Howe. Sir Nicholas Crispe sat on both the Council of Trade and Council of Foreign Plantations. For the full list of members of the Council for Foreign Plantations, see 'Councils of plantations 1660-72', in J. C. Sainty, ed., *Office-Holders in Modern Britain: Volume 3, Officials of the Boards of Trade 1660-1870* (London, 1974), pp. 20-22. British History Online <http://www.british-history.ac.uk/office-holders/vol3/pp20-22> (Accessed 31 May 2019).

⁷³ Chris R. Kyle and Jason Peacey, "'Under cover of so much coming and going': Public Access to Parliament and the Political Process in Early Modern England", in Kyle and Peacey, eds, *Parliament at Work*, p. 22.

⁷⁴ The other attendees not mentioned above were: Thomas Jeffries and William Watts (both of whom had had financial interests in St. Christopher and Nevis), General Venables (who had conquered Jamaica through Cromwell's Western Design five years earlier), Robert Boyle (President of the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel in New England), Edmund Digges, and Edmund Waller. Andrews, *British Committees*, pp. 76-79; Thornton, *West-India Policy*, p. 11.

A. P. Thornton has argued that the Council of Foreign Plantations only dealt with ‘minor matters’, such as the ‘difficulty of collecting bad debts in Barbados’.⁷⁵ However, for the Barbados merchants and absentee planters who dominated the daily affairs of the Council this was actually an issue of pressing importance. The attention given by the Council to topics such as debt collection on Barbados reveals the extent to which merchants with business ties to the island were using this administrative body as a mechanism for furthering their own interests, even though the purview of the Council was technically supposed to extend to all the American colonies. The increased effectiveness of the ‘Barbados merchants’ in securing favourable outcomes to the petitions they submitted was due in large part to their improved representation on advisory bodies such as the Council of Foreign Plantations. This is something which will now be explored in greater detail in the next section of this chapter.

2. The ‘Barbados Merchants’ and the Origins of London’s West India Interest

The previous section detailed how merchants with investments in the sugar boom were increasingly represented on the committees and councils created to govern England’s colonies after 1653. What follows will now explore whether this translated into influence over the formation of colonial and commercial policy in Westminster relating to Barbados. There has been growing interest in recent years in investigating how Britain’s imperial expansion was affected by metropolitan politics. Scholars have found the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries particularly fertile ground for answering these sorts of questions. William Pettigrew has analysed the political debates surrounding the dismantling of the Royal African Company’s monopoly by independent slave traders, while Abigail Swingen has traced how ideological debates in the metropole over ‘competing visions of empire’ fostered the expansion of African

⁷⁵ Thornton, *West-India Policy*, p. 12.

slavery in the colonies.⁷⁶ This section focuses on the mid-seventeenth century, a period which has been given less attention by historians interested in how metropolitan politics shaped the development of England's empire. It explores the formation of an informal pressure group which adopted the identity of the 'Barbados merchants', and submitted petitions to the government in support of their business interests in sugar production and Caribbean trade.

After the expansion of the island's sugar industry in the mid-1640s, London merchants with business interests in Barbados (sometimes in collaboration with ship captains and absentee planters) began to craft petitions airing their opinions about how the colony should be administered. 104 different persons signed a petition under the appellation of the 'Barbados merchants' at least once between 1640 and 1665 (see Table A4, Appendix 2). When the petitions they submitted are viewed collectively, the overall impression they give is that merchants wanted the colony to be governed in a way which suited their investments. Continued political and commercial stability on Barbados was their main objective. Merchants petitioned the English government fervently when conflict in London regarding competing claims to the proprietary patent over the Caribbean Islands flared, when the political situation in Barbados was rendered unstable by factionalism among the inhabitants, and when the commercial dynamic of debt and credit (the foundation of the Barbadian economy) was thrown off balance and began to favour planters rather than merchants. More often than not the signatories of these petitions included leading merchant investors in the sugar boom. But it would be incorrect to suggest there was an organised lobby of 'Barbados merchants' with a consistent set of politics in the mid-seventeenth century: this was an informal association of merchants with shared interests, who sometimes petitioned together to give added strength to their complaints. Moreover, there was not always consensus about how the colony should be governed among all English merchants who traded with Barbados. There were divisions within London's community of colonial traders about the best strategy to reduce Barbados during the 1650-52 royalist rebellion, for instance. While not the focus of this study, it is also important to remember that some

⁷⁶ Pettigrew, *Freedom's Debt*; Swingen, *Competing Visions of Empire*. See also Holly Brewer, 'Slavery, Sovereignty, and "Inheritable Blood": Reconsidering John Locke and the Origins of American Slavery', *The American Historical Review*, Vol. 122, No. 4 (2017), pp. 1038-1078. For an older study which takes a similar approach, see Bliss, *Revolution and Empire*.

prominent inhabitants of Barbados itself had a vastly different perspective to London merchants about how the colony should be governed, and petitioned in the 1650s and 1660s to try to secure increased autonomy from the metropole.

Another consequence of the sugar boom, therefore, is that it led to the emergence of an informal interest group of self-described 'Barbados merchants' in London, who sought to influence the direction of trade and colonial policy relating to the island. I argue that this was a progenitor of the now-infamous West India Interest, the most powerful colonial lobby in London in the mid-eighteenth century, which campaigned to preserve the interests of slaveholders in the face of mounting Abolitionist pressure.⁷⁷ Both the 'Barbados merchants' of the mid-seventeenth century and the eighteenth-century West India Interest sought to further the commercial welfare of Londoners with investments in the Caribbean sugar colonies, and used similar tactics, such as petitioning, to exert political pressure. There were also important differences between the two groups, however. Unlike affiliates of the highly organised West India Interest, the 'Barbados merchants' did not have many members elected as MPs to campaign on their behalf in Westminster, nor did they hire professional lobbyists to develop sophisticated economic arguments in support of their cause.⁷⁸ But I would argue that the similarities outweigh the differences, and that a consistent thread of political lobbying on behalf of the Caribbean sugar colonies links the 'Barbados merchants' to the later West India Interest.

Despite their loud voices, the 'Barbados merchants' and the petitions they submitted in the 1640s and 1650s were often ignored by the English government. This is because, for the most part, the merchants who signed these petitions did not possess formal political power through office-holding themselves, nor

⁷⁷ There is a large body of literature on the eighteenth- and nineteenth-century West India Interest. For essential reading, see Penson, 'The London West India Interest in the Eighteenth Century'; Penson, *The Colonial Agents*; Sheridan, *Sugar and Slavery*, pp. 68-71, 426-433; Andrew J. O'Shaughnessy, 'The Formation of a Commercial Lobby: The West India Interest, British Colonial Policy and the American Revolution', *The Historical Journal*, Vol. 40, No. 1 (1997), pp. 71-95; David Ryden, ed., *The Abolitionists Struggle: Promoters of the Slave Trade* (London, 2003); Morgan, *Slavery and the British Empire*, pp. 50-53, 162-164; Perry Gauci, 'Learning the Ropes of Sand: The West India Lobby, 1714-60', in Perry Gauci, ed., *Regulating the British Economy, 1660-1850* (Farnham, 2011), pp. 107-21.

⁷⁸ The use of paid agents who worked full time in London to promote the interests of Caribbean planters was an innovation of the 1670s, and a by-product of the 'commission system' that was increasingly being used to organise the sugar trade. The rise of the commission system of merchandising will be discussed in Chapter Five.

have personal connections with those who did. For example, Richard Batson, who is the only merchant who signed every petition explored below, never held a government office during his business career.

Those merchants with investments in Barbados who did hold government office, including Martin Noell, Thomas Povey, and Maurice Thomson, did not sign petitions as regularly as some of their counterparts.

This is probably because they could influence the formation of policy through different channels.

Although after the Restoration, when several merchants who petitioned under the identity of the 'Barbados merchants' were appointed to serve on the Council of Foreign Plantations, this lobby group did enjoy slightly more success in getting Westminster to follow their guidance, principally because they now had an institutional mechanism for airing their grievances.

The first record of London merchants petitioning about Barbadian politics dates to October 1643, shortly after the onset of sugar cultivation on the island. Unfortunately, only an abridged summary of the petition has survived, and the names of those who signed it are not included. The document provides the first iteration of a common theme running through all the petitions submitted by 'Barbados merchants' in the mid-seventeenth century: that their most important desire was the continued stability of the colony's government. Apprehensive that the appointment of a new governor by the King could encourage the colonists to 'joyne to the popishe partie', the 'merchantes adventurers of the Barbadoes' petitioned the House of Commons to make MPs aware that 'Phill: Bell, a captyne, is desired by the merchantes to contynewe a governor'.⁷⁹ Whether this recommendation helped Phillip Bell to secure his office is unknown. But what is certain is that he remained governor of the island for another seven years and proved to be an effective public servant. Backed as he was by members of the London merchant community, Bell was able to stabilise the island's political affairs and stimulate the sugar economy during his tenure as governor between 1641 and 1650.⁸⁰

⁷⁹ *Proceedings and Debates*, pp. 145-146, 'The humble petition of divers merchants trading to the island of Barbados, and of divers inhabitants there', 20 October 1643.

⁸⁰ Gragg, *Englishman Transplanted*, pp. 62-63. Alison Games has even suggested that Phillip Bell may have been responsible for encouraging the growth of African slavery on the island, primarily due to his prior experiences on Bermuda and Providence Island, where he owned a contingent of enslaved Africans. Games, *Web of Empire*, pp. 175-176.

The petition of October 1643 also emphasised how London merchants believed that the proprietary system 'hath hindered the plantation'.⁸¹ Uncertainty about the entitlement of private individuals to own land on Barbados was a grave concern among London merchants who had invested heavily in the island's plantation economy during the 1640s. The King's proprietary grant to the Earl of Carlisle in 1627 meant that it was unclear if land on Barbados could be legally owned with freehold tenure, or only leased from the proprietor. Merchants who had invested their capital in land, machinery, and enslaved Africans on Barbados wanted clarity about this issue as a matter of priority. In fact, the next time English merchants intervened in the political affairs of Barbados was when land occupancy on the island was thrown into dispute.

In January 1647 a request from James Hay, the second Earl of Carlisle for permission to travel to Barbados was submitted to the House of Lords.⁸² The proposal sent Carlisle's creditors and a group of London merchants with financial interests in the colony into uproar. The merchants warned that 'the whole plantation would in likelihood perish' if deliberations over competing political claims to govern Barbados caused the people there to cease 'labouring the ground'. They believed such disruption could have an adverse impact on trade and the continued productivity of their sugar estates.⁸³ On 2 March 1647, a petition from the 'merchants and planters adventuring to the island of Barbadoes' was read in the House of Lords by Robert Rich, 2nd Earl of Warwick. With a bold opening statement that placed them in direct opposition to the inherited proprietary privileges claimed by Carlisle, the merchants argued that 'the island of Barbados, in the West Indies, was either totally, or at least principally, planted and settled' by themselves.⁸⁴ The merchants probably felt justified in making this case because they had escalated their commercial involvement in Barbados in recent years, while courtiers with proprietary patents such as the

⁸¹ *Proceedings and Debates*, pp. 145-146

⁸² *Ibid.*, p. 184. For an analysis of a contemporary document offering advice on how Carlisle could successfully transplant his interests to the Caribbean, see Carla Gardina Pestana, 'A West Indian Colonial Governor's Advice: Henry Ashton's 1646 Letter to the Earl of Carlisle', *The William and Mary Quarterly*, Vol. 60, No. 2 (2003), pp. 382-421.

⁸³ *Proceedings and Debates*, pp. 187-188.

⁸⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 188-189, 'The humble petition of the merchants and planters adventuring to the island of Barbadoes', 8 January 1646/7. The 29 signatories of the petition were: Thomas Andrewes, Elias Roberts, Maurice Thomson, Jeremy Blackman, Rob't Wilding, Tho. Peade, Roger Peele, George Pasfield, James White, John Rowe, Thomas Walker, John Webster, Nicho. Butler, Rich'd Lee, Thomas Walkinge, Tho. Frere, Wm. Pennoyer, Ric'd Batson, John Worsam, Michael Davison, Michael Spencer, Stephen Thompson, James Cooke, Lawrence Chambers, Martin Noell, Tho. Cooke, John Vincent, Henry Williamson, Henry Quintyne.

Earl of Carlisle had been more concerned with the civil war in England than colonial affairs. Because the island had been 'brought to some maturity' at their great risk and expense, the petitioners wanted guarantees from Parliament about the continued tenure of their lands on the island, which they hoped in the future would be held in 'free and common soccage', rather than leased from the proprietor.⁸⁵ Despite several lengthy responses penned by the Earl of Carlisle answering the claims made by his critics, it appears that the arguments advanced by the creditors and merchants were persuasive, and in March 1647 his request to leave for Barbados was refused.⁸⁶ A constitutional crisis on Barbados was averted, but only for the time being. Parliament had not resolved the merchants' main grievance: the Earl of Carlisle's proprietary patent and the threat this posed to the future security of their landed investments.

The next time we see a self-described group of 'Barbados merchants' seeking to exert pressure over the formation of policy was during the tumultuous events which occurred in the colony between 1650 and 1652, a period which is sometimes described as the 'Barbadian Civil War'.⁸⁷ This political crisis provoked an informal association of 'Barbados merchants' with financial interests in the sugar industry, but whose members did not possess significant political influence within the Commonwealth government, to submit a flurry of petitions to the Council of State in which they offered several strategies for reaching a peaceful resolution to the royalist rebellion. By trying to avoid outright hostilities these merchants hoped they could prevent the destruction of their property and resume trade. Warfare in northern Brazil between the Dutch and Portuguese just a decade prior had devastated the sugar economy of Bahia and Pernambuco, and probably served as a stark warning that it was better to seek reconciliation with the rebels on Barbados than place their investments in the sugar industry at risk.⁸⁸ Other London merchants who were powerful within the Commonwealth regime, however, are notable absences from these petitions, and based on circumstantial evidence it appears that Maurice Thomson and Martin Noell supported the more forceful approach proposed by the exiled Barbadian planters, which involved instituting a disruptive trade

⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. 188-189.

⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. 191-194.

⁸⁷ E.g. Davis, *The Cavaliers and Roundheads of Barbados*; Gary A. Puckrein, 'The Acquisitive Impulse: Plantation Society, Factions, and the Origins of the Barbadian Civil War (1627-1652)' (PhD dissertation, Brown University, 1985).

⁸⁸ For further information about the warfare in northern Brazil and its damaging impact on the sugar industry there, see Schwartz, 'A Commonwealth within Itself', pp. 166-167.

embargo and launching a military operation against the colony. Opinions were divided among London's colonial traders over the best way to quash the revolt on Barbados. This has not been appreciated by Robert Brenner in his own analysis of these events.⁸⁹

Some background information about the origins of the factional violence on Barbados in the early 1650s is necessary at this point. From 1647 to 1650 an influx of new planters and servants who had supported the royalist cause in England had begun to generate friction between the inhabitants of Barbados. This meant that the political balance which Governor Philip Bell had tried so hard to maintain on Barbados during the early years of the English Civil War was in danger of unravelling. For Parliamentarians living on the island, it presented the alarming prospect that broad support for the King among members of both the free and unfree classes could trigger an island-wide royalist revolt. It was within this tense political climate that the shocking news of Charles I's execution reached the shores of Barbados in the summer of 1649.⁹⁰ Pre-existing divisions between Royalists and Parliamentarians meant that Barbados was already at the edge of internal conflict. The radical steps taken by the regicides in London simply lit the fuse.

Outraged at the execution of the king and the proposals by the new government to limit the independence of the American colonies, leading royalists on Barbados began to convene secret meetings in the spring of 1650.⁹¹ Faced with the prospect of bloodshed, on 3 May 1650, Phillip Bell abandoned political accommodation and subscribed to a settlement which proclaimed Charles II as the rightful King of England.⁹² In a remarkable twist of fate, Francis Lord Willoughby of Parham was anchored in Carlisle Bay, and had been quietly observing events unfold on the island. A parliamentary sympathiser turned

⁸⁹ Brenner, *Merchants and Revolution*, p. 591.

⁹⁰ Unlike for Virginia and Bermuda, the records of precisely when colonists in Barbados heard about the death of the King have not survived. Pestana suggests that because 'winter weather and the seasonal shipping demands brought departures to the colonies to a near standstill in December and January', definitive news could only have reached the Caribbean colonies between the midsummer and early autumn of 1649. I am inclined to agree. Pestana, *English Atlantic in an Age of Revolution*, pp. 88-89.

⁹¹ Foster, *A Brief Relation of the Late Horrid Rebellion*, pp. 6-8.

⁹² Other historians have summarised the complicated political situation on Barbados in April and May 1650 in much more detail. Davis, *The Cavaliers and Roundheads of Barbados*, pp. 137-160; Pestana, *English Atlantic in an Age of Revolution*, pp. 93-99; Puckrein, *Little England*, pp. 104-113; Gragg, *Englishmen Transplanted*, pp. 46-47; Liam Seamus O'Melinn, 'The English West Indies and the English Civil War' (PhD dissertation, Yale University, 1991).

royalist, Willoughby had fled England in 1647 after his property was confiscated by Parliament ‘all at one clap’.⁹³ He did, however, manage to retain what was possibly his most important possession: a patent leased from the Earl of Carlisle constituting him as the ‘Lieutenant-Governor of the Caribbee Isles’.⁹⁴ With this document in hand, Willoughby came ashore on the 7 May 1650, and proclaimed to the inhabitants that he had authority from the Earl of Carlisle and King Charles II to be the new Governor of Barbados. Swift and decisive action was taken to consolidate royalist control over the island. Punitive legislation to sequester the estates of Parliamentarians on Barbados was hurried through the Assembly, and in late May another act was passed which ordered 98 Parliamentary sympathisers to depart the island by 2 July.⁹⁵

The exiled Barbadian planters arrived in England in the late summer of 1650, and immediately set to work lobbying Parliament to adopt an aggressive stance against the rebellious colony. A pamphlet detailing their version of events, titled *A Briefe Relation of the Late Horrid Rebellion Acted in the Island Barbadas*, was written by Nicholas Foster and published in September 1650. The planter’s account was circulated widely, and their description of the ‘Tyranny and Cruelty’ of the ‘Antichristian People’ who had dispossessed them proved influential. They urged that the military strength of the new Commonwealth should be unleashed on the island to restore their confiscated estates and reinstate religious toleration.⁹⁶

The inflammatory language used by the exiled planters disturbed some of the London merchants who owned plantations on Barbados and regularly traded to the island. The merchants’ primary aim was to ensure that their business operations on Barbados continued to run smoothly. Further violence on Barbados could cause the destruction of valuable property and foment an uprising of enslaved Africans and indentured servants, while a naval blockade would severely disrupt trade. Profits from the next year’s sugar crop, which would be ready for harvest in the spring of 1651, were under threat if a compromise could not be reached. Conducting trade with Barbados was already perceived as having become far more

⁹³ Cary, ed., *Memorials of the Great Civil War*, pp. 314-315.

⁹⁴ For Willoughby’s lease of the Carlisle proprietary grant in 1647, see Williamson, *Caribbee Isles*, pp. 121-125.

⁹⁵ ‘An Act for Present Banishment’, 23 May 1650, in Foster, *A Brief Relation of the Late Horrid Rebellion*, pp. 65-70.

⁹⁶ Foster, *A Brief Relation of the Late Horrid Rebellion*, p. 104.

hazardous following the colonist's pronouncement to support the King. In September 1650, for instance, the London merchant John Paige wrote to his business associate William Clerke to inform him that 'the Barbadians have about 3 months since declared for King Charles II and will not be subordinate to any officer that our State shall send over'. Paige believed that until Parliament had reduced Barbados to obedience, 'there wil be no safe trading for you to that island, they being now in a tumultuous way, everyone his own master'.⁹⁷

Due to their desire to resume trade and avoid armed conflict, a group of London merchants co-operated with George Marten, Willoughby's agent in Westminster, to try to negotiate a peaceful resolution to the political standoff on Barbados. In response to the exiled planters' influential publication, they drafted a rival pamphlet to prove Willoughby's credentials as a moderate and balanced governor.⁹⁸ This pamphlet was never published, and the sole surviving copy at the Newberry Library is anonymous and undated.⁹⁹ But the document's content indicates strongly that George Marten and a group of London merchants played a leading role in its creation in the late summer of 1650. Due to many similarities in content it is highly likely that the 'Barbados merchants' who signed several petitions to the Council of State in the autumn of 1650 pleading for a peaceful resolution to the conflict on Barbados, also had a hand in drafting this anonymous pamphlet.¹⁰⁰ It might be that this was the document presented to the Admiralty Committee on 30 August 1650, outlining the merchant's objections to the proposals advanced by the exiled Barbadian planters about the best way to reduce Barbados.¹⁰¹

⁹⁷ Steckley, ed., *The Letters of John Paige*, Source 25B, pp. 26-27, John Paige to William Clerke, 20 Sept 1650.

⁹⁸ Newberry Library, Ayer MS 276, 'An Essay Evenly Discussing the Present Condition and Interest of Barbadoes. And considerations for the Rendring Peaceable to it selfe and usefull to this common Wealth, without the Hazard & the Charge of sending a Fleet to reduce it', [c. 30 August 1650].

⁹⁹ I am uncertain how this manuscript found its way into the Ayer Collection at the Newberry Library rather than the Colonial Office records at the British National Archives, but it might relate to the fact that the advice offered in the pamphlet was not followed by the Council of State, and so remained in private hands.

¹⁰⁰ For this later petition, see TNA, CO 1/11, f. 62. The merchants who signed this later petition, which bears many similarities to the anonymous and unpublished pamphlet in the Newberry Library, included Richard Batson, William Pennoyer, Andrew Riccard, Michael Davison, Thomas Applewhaite, John Wood, Thomas Kendall, and George Pasfield.

¹⁰¹ For the minutes of the meetings convened by the Admiralty Committee when they were working out their strategy to reduce Barbados, in consultation with both merchants and the exiled Barbadian planters, see TNA, SP 25/123, ff. 223-224.

The unpublished pamphlet went to great lengths to emphasise how Willoughby had arrived at the shores of Barbados only after the tumultuous events on Barbados had first begun, and that it would therefore be wrong to hold him accountable for the escalating partisan violence on the island and the banishment of the pro-Parliament planters to England. With Willoughby's innocence asserted, the authors proceeded to lay out their case for using 'more gentle proceedings' to reduce the island to obedience.¹⁰² The main thrust of their argument was that banning trade with Barbados and initiating the process of reducing the island by force would likely cause the inhabitants to 'be driven upon Extreames', and lead to several undesirable consequences for the English state.¹⁰³ It is here that the position of the London merchants who helped to draft this pamphlet becomes clearer, and it was far more self-interested than their rhetoric of preserving 'publick ends' would suggest. Almost all the reasons given to reject launching a naval assault against Barbados were related to the negative commercial repercussions this would have on absentee merchants living in England, rather than the inhabitants of the island itself. There was concern that if Barbados continued its descent into internecine conflict the merchant's sugar estates would be seized, their allies and family members banished, their servants freed and armed to fight Parliament's forces, their enslaved Africans sold in Spanish America, and that their position in the carrying trade to Barbados would be usurped by the Dutch. Such developments would be highly undesirable for London merchants. They argued that while the 'Industry of the Planters' had made Barbados rich and fertile, it was the 'venturous Merchants' who had financed the nascent sugar industry and had since 'been drawne on to expend continually vast Summes upon it'. It was deemed highly likely that their capital investments (which they valued at approximately £300,000) would 'vanish from them forever if a Civill Warre [were to] enter upon that Land'.¹⁰⁴

The Admiralty Committee, however, had a different opinion on how best to quell the colonial revolt. With the political situation in Virginia, Barbados, Antigua, and Bermuda rapidly descending into chaos, powerful members of the new regime did not believe that offering diplomatic overtures to Willoughby would be an effective enough solution. Less than a month before the Plantation Act was enacted by

¹⁰² Newberry Library, Ayer MS 276, f. 3.

¹⁰³ *Ibid.*, f. 4.

¹⁰⁴ *Ibid.*, ff. 4-5.

Parliament the Admiralty Committee was working closely with the exiled Barbadian planters and radical merchants such as Maurice Thomson to formulate a response to the royalist rebellions. On 10 September 1650, for instance, the committee agreed to forward ‘proposicons brought in by Mr Maurice Thomson...concerning the reducing that Island [Barbados]’ to the Council of State.¹⁰⁵ The royalist rebellions in the colonies, which threatened the new regime’s legitimacy, forced Parliament to pass radical new legislation. In the same meeting of 10 September, the Admiralty Committee drafted a copy of the Plantation Act, which was ratified by the Rump Parliament less than three weeks later.¹⁰⁶

When the Plantation Act of September 1650 was first published in the London Exchange, it likely evoked a mixed reaction from the City’s merchants. While undoubtedly delighted with the state’s commitment to increase their trading privileges by restricting foreign merchants from accessing colonial markets, the restrictions placed on commerce with Barbados and the other rebellious colonies were troubling. This was a pressing issue which needed to be resolved swiftly and decisively. Yet rather than offering their support for an invasion of Barbados, some members of the London merchant community with financial interests in the colony remained steadfast in their commitment to finding a peaceful resolution to the conflict.

Between November 1650 and February 1651, the ‘Barbados merchants’ summarised their plan to use ‘more soft and mercifull meanes for the reduceing [of] those Islands’ in a series of petitions.¹⁰⁷ The strategies they proposed to reduce Barbados bear close similarities to those outlined in the anonymous and unpublished pamphlet at the Newberry Library described earlier.¹⁰⁸ In order to re-establish trading relationships with Barbados, 38 London merchants and Willoughby’s agent George Marten petitioned the Council of State on 20 November 1650.¹⁰⁹ There are just eight names common to the petitions of March

¹⁰⁵ TNA, SP 25/123, f. 228.

¹⁰⁶ *Ibid.*

¹⁰⁷ TNA, CO 1/11, f. 78, ‘The Motives and Reasons which have encouraged the Marchants to make their humble addresses to the Parlyament for the present diversion of the Fleete prepared and designed against the Caribian Islands’ [n.d. c. November 1650].

¹⁰⁸ Newberry Library, Ayer MS 276, ff. 6-8.

¹⁰⁹ TNA, CO 1/11, f. 62, ‘The humble desires of diverse Merchants of London and Planters interested in the Iland of Barbadoes, whose names are Subscribed, upon occasion of the late violent actings there against them and others’, 20 November 1650.

1647 and November 1650: Michael Davison, William Pennoyer, Richard Batson, Roger Peele, Stephen Thompson, Thomas Frere, and Henry Williamson. This highlights the amorphous nature of the group which petitioned under the name of the 'Barbados merchants'.¹¹⁰

In their petition the merchants sought permission to despatch six ships to Barbados. Similar in design to the 1642 'sea adventure' to Ireland, the charge of furnishing and maintaining these vessels would be covered by the merchants, and they would only be permitted to trade with Barbados if the islanders freely submitted to the authority of the Commonwealth. To resume friendly relations the Governor, Council, and Assembly would have to 'publicly renounce and disclaim all obedience and subjection to Charles Stuart', repeal anti-Parliamentary legislation, banish the 'most Active Incendiaries in the late troubles' from the island, and restore the estates of those planters forced to flee for supporting Parliament. If the Barbadians refused to subscribe to these four propositions, then the six merchant vessels would help to enforce the embargo of the colony, and when reinforcements arrived 'joine with the State to reduce them by force to the obedience of this Comon Wealth'.¹¹¹

It is telling that the names of conspicuous London merchants with financial interests in the Barbados sugar industry, including Martin Noell and Maurice Thomson, are entirely absent from the petition of 20 November 1650. Circumstantial evidence suggests Noell and Thomson agreed with the exiled Barbadian planters, and preferred to quash the royalist rebellions using Parliament's newfound military strength. This put them into disagreement with the 'Barbados merchants' in London. Perhaps we can speculate that because Martin Noell's brother, Thomas Noell, was among those fined and banished from Barbados for supporting Parliament he preferred a confrontational solution. We can be more certain that Maurice Thomson favoured aggressive tactics: his brother, George Thomson was the chair of the Admiralty

¹¹⁰ The full list of merchants who signed the petition are as follows: 'Nicholas Blake, Tho: Jauncys, Ri: Oakley, Tho: Bell, Robt: Lewellin, Wm: Yeamans, Michell Davison, Chrisson Hooper?, Tho: Murthwaite, William Penoyre, And Riccard, Francis Healey, Richard Nettmaker, John Worsam, Roger Peele, Stephen Thompson, Tho: Applewhaite, James Townesend?, John Wood, Samuell Sambers?, Edward Wood, Gervais Locke, James Hayes, Robert Beney, James Jenkins, George Martin, Richard Batson, Jona: Andrewes, Thomas Kendall, George Pasfield, Issac Pay, Tho: Frere, Edmund Keysar, John Arnett, Henry Williamson, Robert Kirkham, William Williams, Joseph King'. TNA, CO 1/11, f. 62.

¹¹¹ TNA, CO 1/11, f. 62. For the 1642 'sea adventure' to Ireland, which was designed and funded by London merchants, see Lindley, 'Irish Adventurers and Godly Militants', pp. 8-9.

Committee, which drafted the Plantation Act and co-ordinated Parliament's hostile strategy against the recalcitrant plantations.¹¹² Considering the power that merchants such as Thomson wielded within the Commonwealth government more broadly, it should not come as a surprise that it was the course of action they endorsed which Parliament legislated in favour of.

The recommendation to take a forceful approach was persuasive for the Council of State, who deemed the four propositions suggested by the merchants in their petition of 20 November to be 'dishonourable'.¹¹³ Adopting an authoritative stance on the issue of reducing the rebellious colonies would demonstrate to England's European rivals that the new Commonwealth was a capable state, and could project its military power overseas. On 27 November a committee was formed to consider 'the most speedy means to reduce Barbadoes', and only five days later a consensus was reached to launch a fleet to the Caribbean and compel the colony to submit.¹¹⁴ Sir George Ayscue, an experienced naval commander who had served the revolutionary state as Admiral of the Irish Seas in 1649, was appointed as Commander-in-Chief of the squadron to reduce Barbados.¹¹⁵

The 'Barbados merchants' had failed in their efforts to convince Parliament to take a lenient approach towards the rebellious colony, principally because those who signed the petition did not wield significant power within the Commonwealth government. There were others working behind the scenes, including the exiled Barbadian planters and radical merchants like Maurice Thomson, whose lobbying to encourage the government to adopt aggressive tactics was more successful. This was partly because they were more organised: Nicholas Foster was quick off the mark in publishing the exiled planters' version of events, thus establishing the narrative of the debate early on. They also had powerful allies who sat on the

¹¹² For George Thomson, see Brenner, *Merchants and Revolution*, pp. 128-129, 590-591.

¹¹³ TNA, SP 25/13, f. 67.

¹¹⁴ *CSPC AWT*, Vol. 1, p. 347, 27 November 1650; *CSPC AWT* Vol. 1, p. 347, 2 December 1650.

¹¹⁵ For Ayscue's service in Ireland, see TNA, SP 25/87, f. 83; TNA, SP 25/123, f. 76. For Ayscue's appointment as commander of the Barbados fleet, see *CSPC AWT*, Vol. 1, pp. 347-348, 349-350, 16 December 1650, 27 December 1650, 1 February 1651. For an account of Ayscue's career and life, see J. D. Davies, 'Ayscue, Sir George (c. 1615–1672), naval officer', *ODNB* (23 September 2004), <https://www.oxforddnb.com/view/10.1093/ref:odnb/9780198614128.001.0001/odnb-9780198614128-e-956> (Accessed 8 November 2019).

Admiralty Committee and Council of State, and were therefore in a better position to exert influence over the formation of policy.

Despite this disappointment, the 'Barbados merchants' were still resolved to influence the course of events. Shortly after Ayscue was granted his commission to command the Barbados squadron in February 1651, six traders to Barbados outlined their thoughts on how to limit damage to the island's economy once the fleet arrived in the Caribbean: Jonathan Andrewes, George Pasfield, William Williams, Thomas Kendall, Richard Batson, and Isaac de Gay.¹¹⁶ These London merchants and ship captains had all signed the previous petition of November 1650, and in this new petition of February 1651 reiterated their deep concern about the dire consequences an invasion would have on the sugar industry, and that it would lead to the 'probable ruine of the most famous and improving plantacon of the world'. A military assault would have very little chance of success, they argued, because the island was well fortified, and the rebellious colonists possessed a numerical advantage. They therefore advised that 'Reason and pollicie without the Sword may with lesse charge and more certynty' resolve the royalist insurgency on Barbados.¹¹⁷ Their suggestions were again ignored. Officials in Westminster were committed to making an example of the rebellious colonies, and especially Barbados.

After eleven weeks at sea, Sir George Ayscue and his fleet arrived at Barbados on 16 October 1651 and anchored in Carlisle Bay.¹¹⁸ Parliament's forces announced their arrival by capturing 14 Dutch vessels that were trading at the island against the dictates of the embargo passed by the Council of State the year before.¹¹⁹ Ayscue appealed for Governor Willoughby to submit to Parliament. But Willoughby remained defiant, and Barbados soon became paralysed in a diplomatic standoff that would last for nearly three months. In the meantime, Parliament's ships lay menacingly just offshore, besieging the island and stifling

¹¹⁶ TNA, CO 1/11, f. 76, 'Petition of the Merchants trading to Barbadoes [who] desire they may send a person to the Barbadoes before the Fleet goes', 11 February 1650/51.

¹¹⁷ *Ibid.*, f. 76 & f. 78.

¹¹⁸ For an account of Ayscue's campaign to reduce Barbados in 1651-52, see J. R. Powell, 'Sir George Ayscue's Capture of Barbados in 1651' *The Mariner's Mirror*, Vol. 59, No. 3, (1973), pp. 281-290; Puckrein, *Little England*, pp. 120-123; Pestana, *English Atlantic in An Age of Revolution*, pp. 104-108; Gragg, *Englishman Transplanted*, pp. 50-51.

¹¹⁹ TNA, CO 1/11, ff. 145-147; Anon., *A true and exact Narrative of the Proceedings of the Parliaments Fleet, against the Island of Barbadoes* (London, 1650), p. 4.

trade. After a few small skirmishes, Willoughby capitulated and a peace treaty was signed on 13 January 1652. The Commonwealth's reduction of Barbados was complete.¹²⁰ In the end, the merchants' worst fears were not realised: plantations and sugar mills on Barbados would not be destroyed by warring armies like had recently occurred in northern Brazil.

Between 1652 and 1660 sixty petitions related to commercial matters were submitted to the Commonwealth and the Lord Protector by merchants with business ties to the Barbadian sugar economy. As we saw in Chapter Three, permission to ship set quantities of horses, armaments, and clothing to the colony were the most common requests. Most of these petitions were granted by the government without much hesitation, although sometimes the warrants were for fewer commodities than were originally requested by the supplicants. Another noticeable development was how, in the mid-1650s, London merchants began to deploy the science of political arithmetic to quantify the nature and value of their Barbadian investments.¹²¹ For example, merchants were beginning to gather estimates for the population of Barbados, which illustrated the varied demographic makeup of the colony. According to their calculations, 5000 families of freeholders from the British Isles and a further 5000 freemen whose indenture contracts had expired exploited a servile population of 28,000 thousand indentured servants and enslaved Africans.¹²² Historians are rightly sceptical of these census figures, which are almost certainly too high. But the overall conclusion of the merchant's analysis, which indicated that it would be extraordinarily difficult 'to keepe these severall interests peaceably composed under one Government', was broadly accurate.¹²³

By using political arithmetic to better understand Barbadian demography, merchants perceived that their investments in the island's sugar economy were at risk if they did not radically alter the composition of

¹²⁰ *Ibid.*

¹²¹ The phrase 'political arithmetic' refers to the compiling of social statistics to inform the formation of government policy. It is usually attributed to William Petty, who applied such methodologies in his Down Survey of Ireland. For more on political arithmetic, see Paul Slack, 'Government and Information in Seventeenth-Century England', *Past & Present*, Vol. 184 (2004), pp. 33-68; Ted McCormick, *William Petty and the Ambitions of Political Arithmetic* (Oxford, 2009); Slack, *Invention of Improvement*, pp. 116-128.

¹²² BL, Egerton Ms. 2395, ff. 625-627, 'An Estimate of the Barbadoes and of the now inhabitants there'.

¹²³ *Ibid.*, f. 625.

the colony's government. Unless measures were taken in London towards the 'regulating and composing the many disorders and discontents of the said Island' then the colony was 'ready to be ruined within ittselfe by the misgovernment thereof'.¹²⁴ It is no coincidence, therefore, that in the mid-1650s we see several groups of London merchants with business ties to Barbados drawing-up plans to increase central control over the colony. London merchants deployed political arithmetic to justify their vision of colonial state formation.

In January 1654, after the demise of the Commonwealth regime in England had once again thrown the constitution of the colony's government into dispute,¹²⁵ an association of 'Barbados merchants' submitted a petition to the Lord Protector in which they offered suggestions about how to better govern the island. Because these merchants had 'beene great sufferers by the discouragements and distracons which have been upon the Charibbee Islands more especially the Island of barbados', they argued that the government of Barbados should be balanced between Westminster and the island itself. In London, a council of seven men (presumably merchants) would have delegated powers to supervise the affairs of all the Caribbean colonies.¹²⁶ On Barbados, a council of seven freeholders with 'good interests and experience of the place' and proven loyalty to the Protectorate regime would be handed patents from Cromwell authorising them to govern the colony. This council was to be accorded powers to vote one of their members into the position of governor, who would hold office until new elections a year later.¹²⁷ If it had been implemented, the merchant's plan would have drastically increased the power emanating from the imperial centre over the administration of the distant island.¹²⁸

¹²⁴ TNA, CO 1/12, f. 42.

¹²⁵ The political tumult following dissolution of the Rump Parliament in April 1653 gave the Barbados Assembly new pretext to agitate for increased powers. See TNA, CO 1/12, ff. 22-25, Daniel Searle to the Council of State, 28 August 1653.

¹²⁶ TNA, CO 1/12, f. 42, 'Petition of the Merchants of London interested in & traders to the Island of Barbados', 14 January 1654. The signatories of his petition were: Thomas Cooper, Michell Daiuson, Nicholas Blake, Wm Williams, Tho: Frere, Miyles Goodycan?, Geo: Smith, Will Penoyre, John White, Edwin Browne, Andrew Riccard, Richard Batson, Lu: Sowdon, Issac de Gay.

¹²⁷ BL, Egerton Ms. 2395, f. 625; TNA, CO 1/12, f. 42.

¹²⁸ Rough notes produced by the London merchants when they were formulating their plan for reforming the government of Barbados have survived. These drafts suggest that James Drax was being considered for the position of governor, presumably due to his personal connections with powerful merchants in the City of London and loyal stance to Parliament throughout the recent troubles. Other prominent plantation owners were listed by the merchants as suitable candidates for sitting on a new Barbados council, including Thomas Modyford, William

When we analyse the names of those who signed the petition of January 1654 several patterns emerge. Richard Batson, William Williams, and Isaac de Gay signed all three of the extant petitions relating to Barbados politics in the 1650s (Nov. 1650, Feb. 1651, and Jan. 1654), and we can therefore identify them as some of the most politically active merchants who traded to Barbados. There are five other merchants whose names are common to both the November 1650 and January 1654 petitions: Michael Davison, Nicholas Blake, Thomas Frere, William Pennoyer, and Andrew Riccard. These eight men were the core group of London merchants who petitioned using the identity of 'Barbados merchants' in the 1650s. They shared a conviction that promoting political stability on Barbados was crucial for the future security of their investments in the sugar industry.

There are some notable absences from the petition of January 1654, however, of whom Martin Noell and Thomas Povey are among the most conspicuous. It is interesting to note, therefore, that 1654 was the same year that Noell and Povey first presented a proposal about the formation of their own West India Council to Cromwell. These plans, which were described in the previous section of this chapter, differed in important respects to those suggested by the 'Barbados merchants' in their petition: Povey and Noell did not recommend that a council of freeholders be formed on Barbados to give planters a say in their own administration, for example. But what does seem to be the case is that in 1654 plans were in motion to centralise control over the governance of Barbados and the other Caribbean sugar colonies, and that several groups of London merchants were lobbying to achieve this goal. Unlike the 'Barbados merchants', Povey and Noell possessed formal political power through office-holding in the Protectorate regime (e.g. on the Committee for America), meaning they did not need to supplicate through petitioning to have a platform for airing their opinions, and instead probably submitted their proposals to Cromwell and his Council of State directly. Noell and Povey's extensive political influence was responsible for eventually getting their plan implemented, because as we have seen the Council for Foreign Plantations was modelled on their proposals for a West India Council.

Hilliard, John Birch, Thomas Middleton, Edward Thompson, and the former governor Henry Hawley. TNA, CO 1/12, f. 44.

The Restoration of the monarchy put colonial charters and the commissions of governors on uncertain footing, and thus sparked an explosion of petitioning activity by London merchants in the summer of 1660.¹²⁹ The return of the King revived uncertainty surrounding land tenure on Barbados, because it presented the possibility that the proprietary patent granted to the Earl of Carlisle would be reinstated. The Governor and Council of Barbados had anticipated this development as soon as they received word about the Restoration in July 1660. The following month they dispatched an embassy led by the planter Peter Watson who, armed with a monetary gift for the King, was instructed to lobby to prevent the re-imposition of the proprietary grant.¹³⁰ But the Barbadian planters could not have foreseen how Francis Lord Willoughby, who had leased the patent from the Carlisle estate in 1647 and was deposed from his office of governor of Barbados by the Commonwealth in 1652, would be quick off the mark in pressuring the King to allow him to resume his proprietorship over the Caribbee Isles. Some of London's traders to the Caribbean, several of whom had petitioned against the proprietary grant 13 years before, were taken aback when they saw a commission stamped with the King's seal which commanded all to 'to receive and obey the Lord Willobey as the Proprietor'. Although by mid-century merchants and planters were clashing more frequently over their divergent visions for the governance of England's empire, they were in broad agreement that reinstating the Carlisle proprietary would be anathema to the security of their landed investments on Barbados.¹³¹

The merchants presented a petition on 2 August in which they beseeched the King to reconsider granting letter's patent to Willoughby in such a hasty manner, especially before the 'parties concerned [had been] fully heard and the right in question [had been] determined by his Majesty and the Laws of his Kingdome'.¹³² A few days later another petition, arguing for the same outcome, was signed by a similar

¹²⁹ For examples, see TNA, CO 1/14, f. 29, 31.

¹³⁰ The Governor and Council of Barbados ordered that the embassy of Peter Watson was to be 'Joynly presented [to the King] by John Colleton, James Drax, Thomas Kendall, Jonathan Andrews, Tobias Frere, Edward Walrond, and Peter Watson Esqrs or to many of them as are willing'. This suggests that the Governor and Council of Barbados envisioned that planters and merchants in London would work together to lobby against the reinstatement of the Carlisle proprietary. TNA, CO 31/1, 'Minutes of the Council in Assembly of Barbados', 2 August 1660, ff. 14-15; Penson, *The Colonial Agents*, pp. 27-30.

¹³¹ TNA, CO 1/14, f. 64.

¹³² *Ibid.* The signatories of this petition were: Thomas Middleton, Thomas Matthew, Wm Williams, Gabriell Goodman, Robt Wilding, Richard Batson, John Robert, Richard Kemble, Alex Pollington, Mar: Mortimer, John Colleton, Thomas Kendall, Charles Everard, Wm Willet?, Edward Lewis, Tobias Frere.

group of merchants and presented to the King.¹³³ Leading merchant investors in the Barbados sugar boom offered their support to these two petitions, including Andrew Riccard, William Williams, John Colleton, Thomas Kendall, Thomas Parris, Thomas Middleton, Richard Batson, Peter Lear, Robert Wilding, and Giles Silvester. A few of these merchants, most notably Riccard, Williams, and Batson, had a history of petitioning together as the 'Barbados merchants' during the 1650s. But it appears that John Colleton and Thomas Kendall, the brother-in-law of Thomas Modyford who was himself also vying to secure the position of governor of Barbados permanently, were co-ordinating the merchants' protest in London.

As per the merchants' request, a hearing before the Privy Council's Committee for Plantations was arranged in early August. Depositions from those involved in the first settlement of the Caribbean colonies were used to provide support for the merchants' claim that the Carlisle proprietorship was illegal.¹³⁴ The committee came to a decision on 30 August, but it was not good news for the 'Marchants adventurers for the Barbadoes'. The Committee for Plantations was wholly dominated by aristocratic privy councillors, and it therefore cannot have come as much of a surprise that the body legislated in favour of Lord Willoughby, who they recommended 'ought to be restored to the Government of that Island and to be there placed in the same condition as when he was dispossessed of it by the illegall power of Cromwell'.¹³⁵

Dispute over the Caribbean proprietary was not resolved by the Plantation Committee's ruling in favour of Willoughby. Other interested parties entered the fray and also sought financial gain from the eventual settlement. For example, creditors such as William Latham believed the profits that would soon accrue from the proprietary could act as a means of repayment for the debts they had been owed by the Carlisle

¹³³ TNA, CO 1/14, f. 66. The signatories of this petition were: And Riccard, Robt Wilding, Thomas Middleton, J: B?hall?, Jona: Andrews, Gabriall Goodman, Anthony Sadler, Peter Lear, Henry Batson, Row: Seafeld, Mar: Mortimer, Richard Batson, Ben: Skutt, Tho: Fer, Jno Pennell, Walter Sike?, Henry Spurstowe, Wm Sewster, Edward Swester, Thomas Gott, James Watling?, Jno Goodin, Thomas Parris, Thomas Kendall, Jno Colleton, James Shtry?, Giles Silvester, Abraham Moore, John Robinson, John Koothey?, John Hill.

¹³⁴ TNA, CO 1/14, f. 85.

¹³⁵ TNA, CO 1/14, f. 99 & 104.

estate for over thirty years.¹³⁶ Beginning in February 1661 the Crown carried out a more detailed enquiry into the issue, during which each stakeholder had the opportunity to present evidence to support their case. This investigation took over a year to complete.¹³⁷ The merchants' position was reiterated in a petition of 1 March 1661. They urged that 'fresh letters may be sent to the said Island intimating your Majesty's resolucon of takeing the English plantacons in America and particularly Barbadas into a more immediate dependencie on the Crowne'. The merchants tried to facilitate this deal by proposing that, in return for dismantling the proprietary and confirming legal ownership of their land, plantation-owners would agree to 'pay your Majesty some Rate percent, on the Comodityes in the Island, as well as the custome here'.¹³⁸

This offer alienated planters on Barbados from continuing to work with the London merchants, even though both parties sought to secure the same ends. Humphrey Walrond wrote on 29 March from Barbados that he had heard 'reports that Mr Kendall and Mr Colleton, the more powerfully to oppose the Lord Willoughby, take up on them in our names to act, and propose four on ye hundred in kind for all commodities here to bee paid his Matie if hee will take into his hand the Earle of Carlisles interest'. But he disavowed the merchant's proposal, stressing how 'those gents have no power from us to act so'.¹³⁹ As soon as the Governor and Council of Barbados had received formal conformation from James Drax about the merchants' plan in July 1661 they immediately instructed the Assembly to petition the King 'against the propositions of four per cent'.¹⁴⁰

Planters on Barbados had good reason to be angry. Although titled the 'Humble Peticon of divers Planters of Barbadas Inhabiting in and about London', the 13 signatories of the March 1661 petition were

¹³⁶ For the other interested parties in the profits of the Carlisle proprietary, see Sarah Barber, *The Disputations Caribbean: The West Indies in the Seventeenth Century* (London, 2014), pp. 67-68, 71-72. Carlisle's creditors (William Latham, Andrew Beech, Godfrey Havercamp, Samuel Baker, and John Johnson) submitted a petition on 20 February 1661 stating that they wanted the revenue of the sugar colonies to be used to repay their debts, see TNA, CO 1/15, f. 41.

¹³⁷ TNA, CO 1/15, f. 43; Thornton, *West-India Policy*, p. 32.

¹³⁸ TNA, CO 1/15, f. 46, 'The Humble Peticon of divers Planters of Barbadas Inhabiting in and about London', 1 March 1660/61.

¹³⁹ TNA, CO 1/15, f. 71.

¹⁴⁰ TNA, CO 31/1, f. 28, 'Minutes of the Council of Barbados', 4 July 1661. For more on the duty of 4 ½ per cent, see Sheridan, *Sugar and Slavery*, pp. 48-49; Barber, *Disputations Caribbean*, pp. 73-75.

in fact mostly absentee merchants who owned property on the island.¹⁴¹ Some of the petitioners had a prior history of lobbying under the name of the 'Barbados merchants' in the 1650s: familiar figures such as Richard Batson, Andrew Riccard, William Williams, and Thomas Frere are among the names appended to the document. All but three (William Chamberlain, Jonathan Andrews, and Martin Noell) had also signed the previous petitions about abolishing the proprietorship which were presented to the King in August 1660.¹⁴² Most important, however, was that seven of the petitioners were also represented on the recently established Council of Foreign Plantations: Andrew Riccard, Williams Williams, Thomas Kendall, Peter Lear, John Colleton, Thomas Middleton, and Martin Noell. It was because more than half of the merchants who signed the petition wielded formal political power in an institution recently created to govern England's empire that the legal settlement relating to the Carlisle proprietary followed their advice almost completely.

The London merchants who signed the petition of March 1661 engineered the compromise which ended the dispute over the Carlisle proprietary and inaugurated the infamous 4 ½ per cent duty on exports from the Caribbean. After much debate the intricacies of the settlement were laid out in a patent of June 1663. Like the merchants had requested, the Earl of Carlisle's proprietary patent was voided. Barbados and the Leeward Islands were now royal colonies, and consequently also brought under increased supervision of the English state. With the abolition of the proprietorship, planters and merchants who had invested in the Caribbean plantation economy would never again have to worry about the legal status of their land. Information that Charles II would assume control over the proprietorship was communicated to the Barbados planters in an act of the Privy Council on 28 March 1661. This decision had therefore been made early on in the negotiating process, and less than a month after the merchant's petition of 1 March had been presented.¹⁴³ The King, once again following the merchant's advice, also imposed a new export duty of 4 ½ per cent on all 'dead Comodities of the Groweth or Produce of this Island', which was

¹⁴¹ The thirteen signatories were: Andrew Riccard, Richard Batson, William Williams, Thomas Kendall, John Roberts, Peter Lear, John Colleton, Tho: Middleton, Tobias Frere, Will Chamberlaine, Martin Noell, Jona: Andrews, and Thomas Parris.

¹⁴² Three of those who signed the petition of March 1661 had signed the petition of March 1647, which also condemned the proprietary: Thomas Frere, Richard Batson, and Martin Noell.

¹⁴³ *APCC*, no. 509, pp. 305-306.

ratified by the Barbados assembly on 12 September 1663.¹⁴⁴ By first suggesting and helping to implement the levy of 4 ½ per cent, merchant investors in the sugar boom had created a longstanding grievance for sugar planters. The customs duty was a major point of contention for planters in the Caribbean for effectively the entire duration of the 175 years it remained in place.¹⁴⁵

In the early 1660s London merchants with business interests in the Barbados sugar industry also submitted petitions related to commerce, and used the Council for Foreign Plantations as a mechanism for seeking advantage in trade. In July 1661 a petition of the ‘Planters, Merchants, Mariners, and Traders in the Island of Barbadoes’ was submitted to the King, who having heard its contents in a meeting of the Privy Council, proceeded to forward it to the Council for Foreign Plantations. The petitioners began by highlighting how they had ‘layed out the greatest part of their fortunes and estates for the raising and improving of Trade and Plantacon in the said Island’. Their investment had been worthwhile, they argued, because of the numerous private and public benefits that had been accrued by the commercial success of the colony.¹⁴⁶ But the petitioners warned how the whole trade of the colony would ‘sodainly and unavoidably be ruined and discouraged’ without new regulations to better control the quality of the sugar exported from Barbados. They claimed that not enough care had been taken by planters to ensure that the sugar shipped from the island was cleaned of impurities. The petitioners therefore requested that the King impose a heavy duty of ‘thirty shillings per hundredweight’ on unpurged Barbadian sugar to discourage planters from selling merchants such an ‘unmerchantable’ commodity in the future.¹⁴⁷

¹⁴⁴ For the 13 June 1663 settlement see *APCC*, no. 598, pp. 355-361; no. 599, pp. 362-365. See also Williamson, *Caribbee Isles*, pp. 198-214; Thornton, *West-India Policy*, pp. 36-38; Bliss, *Revolution and Empire*, pp. 145-146. For the act of the Barbados Assembly see: TNA, CO 30/1, ff. 36-37, ‘An Act for settling an Impost on the Commodities of the growth of this Island’. See also Thornton, *West-India Policy*, p. 38.

¹⁴⁵ The most eloquent protest against the export duty was Edward Littleton’s *Groans of the Plantations* (1689). Littleton used fiery rhetoric to express his indignance about how ‘upon the King’s Restauration we were in effect made Forainers and Aliens... the Duty of four and a half percent was extorted from us in barbados, full score against our Wills’. Edward Littleton, *The Groans of the Plantations; or A True Account of their Grievs and Extreme Sufferings By the Heary Impositions Upon Sugar, And other Hardships. Relating more Particularly to the Island of Barbados* (London, 1689), pp. 1-2.

¹⁴⁶ According to the petitioners, Barbados ‘hath for some time yearly employed two hundred saile of shipping’, and by expanding sugar production in the colonies had made the commodity more affordable for Englishmen. They also emphasised how the island maintained a fighting population of ten thousand men, and in recent years had functioned as a ‘nursery’ for the planting of other English colonies in the Caribbean.

¹⁴⁷ ‘The humble peticon of the Planters, Merchants, Mariners, and Traders in the Island of Barbadoes’, TNA, CO 1/15, ff. 61-62.

Unfortunately, there are no signatures appended to the manuscript, and so it remains uncertain who among the London merchant community supported the petition. What is clear, however, is that the petition was received favourably by the Council for Foreign Plantations, made up as it was by numerous planters and merchants with Barbadian connections. Francis Lord Willoughby, James Drax, John Colleton, Thomas Kendall, Thomas Povey, and Thomas Middleton were appointed to a select committee of the council to consider how best to deal with the issue. Although it is likely that the case made by the merchants in their petition was exaggerated, the select committee were convinced by their argument, and by the 19 August had already drawn up a letter to be sent to Barbados instructing the colonial administration to revise existing laws ‘for making good and merchantable sugars’.¹⁴⁸ Remarkably, the letter has survived at the British Library. It reveals how the Council of Foreign Plantations required the Governor, Council, and Assembly of Barbados to consult a set of papers about regulating the manufacture of sugar which had been enclosed within the letter, and to ‘Dejest [them] into Lawes to bee enacted’. Only once a ‘standard for the goodness and Marchantableness of sugars’ was settled would ‘Certaine Marchants of London...enter into a Contract with good securitie for performance to buy yearly all the uncleyed muscovados of that Island’.¹⁴⁹ It is here, within an official letter drafted by numerous merchant investors in the sugar boom, that we begin to see the origins of the commission system of organising trade with the Caribbean colonies.

In the early 1660s London merchants also petitioned the King for redress from the difficulties they were encountering with collecting debts on Barbados. A group of seventeen ‘Planters, Merchants, and Traders to the Island of Barbadoes’ signed a petition in 1660 which claimed that ‘the Lawes of this Nation have not been fully put in execucon for the recovery of debts in that Island’.¹⁵⁰ This problem, they argued, had been ‘occasioned through the want of knowledge of the said Lawes in the former Governors of the said

¹⁴⁸ For the deliberations conducted by the Council of Foreign Plantations and its select committee on this issue, see TNA, CO 1/14, ff. 159-160.

¹⁴⁹ BL, Egerton Ms. 2395, f. 642, ‘Letter prepared by the Councill of Plantations to the Governor Council and Assembly of Barbados concerning the manufacture of sugar’ [n.d. c. August 1661].

¹⁵⁰ TNA, CO 1/15, f. 47, ‘The humble Peticon of the Planters, Merchants, and Traders to the Island of Barbadoes’. The 17 signatories of the petition were: Andrew Riccard, William Williams, Richard Batson, Thomas Middleton, Tobias Frere, David Skynner, Richard King, Jonathan Keate, Henry Batson, Thomas Oveall, John Berwick, Thomas Frere, John Pennell, Jonathan Andrews, Seth Rowley, William Beale, and George Keate.

Island'. The petitioners therefore requested that Thomas Modyford, a Barbadian planter who was by training a lawyer, be continued as governor of Barbados.¹⁵¹ Merchants with a track record of petitioning about issues related to Barbados in the 1650s, including Andrew Riccard, William Williams, Richard Batson, Thomas Frere, and Thomas Middleton, were among the signatories. The issue of bad debts resurfaced in May 1663 following reports that the deputy governor of Barbados and the council, who themselves were heavily indebted to merchants, were 'obstructing all proceedings at Lawe against any Planters there for their debts'.¹⁵²

The Council for Foreign Plantations appointed Martin Noell, John Colleton, and Thomas Middleton as a select committee to coordinate a response to this 'stoppe of Justice', which threatened England's entire trade with the colony. The report they drafted advised the King to intervene by repealing the deputy-governor's order and encouraging merchants 'to take their legal remedy' against planters who had been evading their creditors. Both the King and Francis Lord Willoughby, the latter of whom was in the process of preparing to depart for Barbados, were given a copy of this report.¹⁵³ As we will see in the next section, exercising greater control over debt collection in the American colonies was a longstanding issue for merchants, and was a primary reason why London merchants engineered appointments of their relatives and allies to the office of Provost Marshal on Barbados.

Most of the London merchants who invested in the 1640s sugar boom and petitioned as the 'Barbados merchants' had died by the 1670s. The mantle of petitioning Westminster on behalf of issues related to Barbados and the other sugar colonies was taken up by a new generation of absentee planters and London merchants. Some of these newcomers were relatives of those who had pioneered sugar production on Barbados in the 1640s, having inherited property on the island after the death of their fathers or uncles. It was these men who formed the first formal West India lobby groups in the early

¹⁵¹ A note at the bottom of the petition reads 'appointed Gov. by Council of State 24 April 1660'. It appears that the King and his Privy Council heeded the merchants' advice and appointed Modyford governor. Unfortunately for the merchants, the machinations of Willoughby to reinstate the proprietary meant that Modyford's tenure as governor was short-lived.

¹⁵² TNA, CO 1/14, f. 166-167. See also TNA, CO 1/66, f. 183.

¹⁵³ *Ibid.*

1670s: the ‘Committee of Gentlemen Planters in London’ and the ‘Committee for the Public Concern of Barbadoes’. These committees, which were mostly made up of absentee merchants, lobbied vehemently to prevent the imposition of new import duties on sugar produced in the colonies, and were the first to appoint salaried agents as permanent representatives in London.¹⁵⁴ Because most of the original investors in the sugar boom were already deceased, there is little crossover between the members of these committees and those who had petitioned using the identity of the ‘Barbados merchants’. The only survivor is Thomas Middleton, who was a member of the Committee of Gentleman Planters in 1671. But the surnames of those who served on these committees are broadly familiar. We see Francis Lord Willoughby Jr., Peter Colleton, Henry Drax, Edward Pye, and Jacob Lucy, all of whom were relatives of the original investors in Barbadian sugar during the 1640s, serving on either one or both of these pressure groups formed in London to further the interests of Caribbean merchants and planters.¹⁵⁵

Historians have not previously traced the origins of London’s West India Interest to the period between 1643 and 1663. In her study of the colonial agents of the British Caribbean, Lilian Penson suggested that the committees of ‘Gentleman Planters’ and ‘Public Concern of Barbadoes’ formed in the early 1670s were the starting point of the lobby. More recently, Andrew J. O’Shaughnessy has argued that a professional and organised West India lobby first emerged in response to the challenges of the American Revolution, and that it did not even exist as a formal body before the 1760s.¹⁵⁶ In this section I have argued that we can detect a consistent pattern of political lobbying on behalf of Caribbean interests to as early as the middle decades of the seventeenth century, when an informal association of merchants and plantation-owners who had financed the sugar boom began to petition using the identity of the ‘Barbados merchants’.

As the first English colony to reap the full benefits of commercial sugar production, it should not come as a surprise that London’s West India Interest originated with investors in Barbados. The ‘Barbados

¹⁵⁴ Penson, ‘The London West India Interest in the Eighteenth Century’, pp. 374-375; Thornton, *West-India Policy*, p. 135, 142-144; Penson, *The Colonial Agents*, pp. 46-59, 182-185.

¹⁵⁵ For the membership of these committees, see *CSPC AWI*, Vol. 7, p. 228, 15 June 1671.

¹⁵⁶ Penson, *The Colonial Agents*, ch. 3; O’Shaughnessy, ‘The Formation of a Commercial Lobby’, pp. 71-75.

merchants' were an amorphous group, with the signatures of various members appearing, disappearing, and then sometimes reappearing over time. But we can identify that there were some 'Barbados merchants' who were highly politically active because they frequently signed petitions: Richard Batson, Andrew Riccard, William Williams, Thomas Frere, Michael Davison, William Pennoyer, Thomas Middleton, Isaac de Gay, and, to a slightly lesser extent, Thomas Kendall, John Colleton, Nicholas Blake, Martin Noell, Maurice Thomson, and Peter Lear. These merchant investors in the Barbados sugar industry were moved to petition the English government when political uncertainty on the island threatened the security of their assets.

As well as being responsible for social and economic transformations on Barbados, therefore, the sugar boom also precipitated political changes in England by encouraging absentee merchants and planters in London with shared business interests to lobby the government. The ability of this informal lobby to influence the formation of government policy increased over time. In the 1640s and 1650s the majority of traders who signed petitions as the 'Barbados Merchants' did not possess political power themselves through appointment to government office. Most of the time, therefore, their petitions were simply ignored. But by the Restoration, and particularly after the formation of the Council of Foreign Plantations in December 1660, merchants who had formerly petitioned as the 'Barbados merchants' were now serving on institutions in London used to govern England's plantations. Hence, they began to see more success in having the advice they proffered in their petitions turned into legislation.

The 'Barbados merchants' never came anywhere close to the level of political influence enjoyed by the organised West India lobby groups that would emerge in the eighteenth century and guide legislation such as the Molasses Act (1733) through Parliament.¹⁵⁷ This is partly because the group of businessmen resident in London with interests in the sugar colonies was much smaller in the mid-seventeenth century. Absenteeism, the use of commission agents, and the employment of salaried lobbyists (developments which greatly increased the population of men with Caribbean interests in London) were all in their

¹⁵⁷ For the Molasses Act, see Sheridan, *Sugar and Slavery*, p. 68; Morgan, *Slavery in the British Empire*, p. 51.

infancy in the middle decades of the seventeenth century. Also important was how the representation of Caribbean businessmen in Parliament was minor when compared to later decades.¹⁵⁸ Historians such as O'Shaughnessy are correct, therefore, to argue that the West India Interest was at its most organised and powerful in the eighteenth century. The point of this section has been to show that this same interest group also existed in the mid-seventeenth century, immediately following the sugar boom, in a rudimentary and less influential form.

3. The Influence of London Merchants in the Local Government of Barbados

The final section of this chapter will investigate whether the political reach of London merchants extended across the Atlantic, enabling merchants to exert influence within the local administration of Barbados itself. Did absentee London merchants try to exert political and commercial authority on Barbados? And if so, were their efforts successful? This section will answer these questions by delineating the structure of the colony's government in the mid-seventeenth century, and analysing whether the family members and business agents sent overseas on behalf of London merchants were able to control the various offices which made up the island's government. Previous historians have outlined in detail the political structure of Barbados in the seventeenth century.¹⁵⁹ Our focus here, therefore, will be on the importance of merchant interests within these institutions.

¹⁵⁸ For the representation of Caribbean businessmen in Parliament during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, see Barry Higman, 'The West India Interest in Parliament, 1807-1833', *Historical Studies*, Vol. 13 (1967), pp. 1-19; Sheridan, *Sugar and Slavery*, pp. 60-71; O'Shaughnessy, 'The Formation of a Commercial Lobby', pp. 72-74.

¹⁵⁹ E.g. BL, Add. Ms. 27382, ff. 191-196, 'The Present State of Justice in the American Plantations, and particularly in the Island of Barbados', [c. 1690]; Frederick G. Spurdle, *Early West Indian Government: Showing the Progress of Government in Barbados, Jamaica, and the Leeward Islands, 1660-1783* (Palmerston, New Zealand, 1960), ch. 1-3; Gragg, *Englishmen Transplanted*, ch. 4.

The Barbadian government in the mid-seventeenth century was a unicameral legislature, and consisted of a governor, council, and assembly. A hierarchical pattern of officeholding prevailed, with the most powerful and prestigious political office being the position of governor. The governor was appointed by commission in England before being dispatched overseas. In the era of the Carlisle proprietary the prerogative to appoint a new governor was reserved to the proprietor. But during the Interregnum the Council of State assumed this responsibility, and after Barbados was made a royal colony in 1663 it passed to the King. The governor was delegated extensive powers through a commission drawn up by one of these higher authorities in England. In the early years of the colony's history all executive, legislative, and judicial power was concentrated in the governor and his council, who were by him appointed and therefore subservient to his authority. Until the emergence of a representative Assembly between 1639 and 1641, the governor and council could pass legislation, levy taxes, declare martial law, appoint commissioned officers, and convene courts without any input from the wider population.¹⁶⁰

The prevailing merchant attitude towards the office of governor was that they wanted continuity in personnel so as not to encourage factionalism and political division among the colonial inhabitants, which could threaten the security of their investments. The petition from 1643 in which the 'Barbados merchants' desired Phillip Bell to 'contynewe a governor' and the petitions submitted by merchants immediately following the Restoration regarding the governors of St. Christopher and Nevis are good examples.¹⁶¹ None of the London merchants who invested in the sugar boom ever had a family member or business partner appointed governor of Barbados during our period of enquiry.¹⁶² But they often threw their weight behind a preferred candidate by petitioning the English government, and deliberately sought to cultivate a close working relationship with those who were serving in the position.¹⁶³ To make sure the governor remained amenable to their interests, for example, merchants offered those occupying the office

¹⁶⁰ Spurdle, *Early West Indian Government*, p. 10.

¹⁶¹ For the 1643 Phillip Bell petition, see *Proceedings and Debates*, pp. 145-146. For the St. Christopher and Nevis petitions, see TNA, CO 1/14, f. 29, 31.

¹⁶² There are examples of merchant representatives securing the highest political office on Barbados in the latter part of the seventeenth century. For instance, the Royal African Company's chief factor on Barbados, Edwyn Stede, served as governor of the colony from 1685-1690. See Dunn, *Sugar and Slaves*, p. 101.

¹⁶³ See, for example, the meeting convened at the Cardinal's Cap in 1659, which was described in the introduction to this chapter. BL, Egerton Ms. 2395, f. 177 & ff. 179-181,

gifts and extended them more generous credit than the rest of the colony's inhabitants. As I argued in Chapter Three, the enhanced reputation associated with serving in such a prestigious office probably also played a part in why merchants decided to extend governors extra credit.

There are numerous examples which could be used to illustrate the close relationship between London merchants and Barbadian governors in the era of the sugar boom. Only one will be described here.

During the late 1650s the absentee Barbadian plantation owners Martin Noell, Thomas Povey, and James Drax were working in London to preserve the position of Daniel Searle as the island's governor in the face of mounting pressure from other factions calling for his immediate replacement. Their correspondence with Searle demonstrates how absentee merchants and planters applied pressure in Westminster and the London Exchange to secure commissions for their favoured candidates to the governorship. Governor Searle was, in the words of Thomas Povey, 'almost wholly defended and kept up by Mr Martin Noells interests and dexteritie'.¹⁶⁴ The methods used to maintain Searle's position were revealed in a letter dated October 1659, when Povey wrote:

I shall watch closely for anything that may bee stirring to your prejudice att Whitehall and shall as Comissionated by you take upon mee to answer for you. And if I can keepe you secure in the Capacitie you now are (which I deeme to bee effectuall enough considering your letters of confirmation from the Councell of State) I shall not unreasonably press for the renewing of your Comissions.¹⁶⁵

Serving as a member of the council was the second most powerful office on Barbados, and was therefore generally available to only the most dignified inhabitants of the colony. The council was nominated by the governor, and in the mid-seventeenth century the number of councillors varied from as many as thirteen members in 1641, to as few as six in the second half of the 1650s.¹⁶⁶ The head representative of the council was known as the President. One member held the office of secretary, a position which conferred numerous civic responsibilities including taking minutes during council meetings, issuing tickets of leave

¹⁶⁴ BL, Add. Ms. 11411, ff. 55-57, Thomas Povey to William Povey, 3 April 1658.

¹⁶⁵ BL, Egerton Ms. 2395, ff. 176-181, Thomas Povey to Daniel Searle, 29 October 1659.

¹⁶⁶ Spurdle, *Early West Indian Government*, p. 12.

to give people formal permission to leave the island, and assisting in the drafting of official correspondence from the governor to political authorities in England.¹⁶⁷ The Barbados council had a dual function in our period: it handled the administrative business of government by serving as an advisory body to the governor, and before the formation of the Assembly also had the ability to pass legislation itself. When in session with the governor present the council could also function as a Court of Chancery, a Court of Appeals, and a Court of General Sessions.¹⁶⁸ Sitting on the council was a big commitment for those who served, as it obliged them to journey to Bridgetown an average of three days each month to carry out their duties. There was a high turnover in council membership on Barbados until the mid-1650s, after which there was more stability in officeholding.¹⁶⁹

In October 1641, a few years before the island's sugar industry began in earnest, there were no representatives or family members of London merchants serving on the Barbados council. Only William Povey, the brother of the businessmen and civil servant Thomas Povey, had a seat on the council as its secretary. Otherwise the body was wholly made up of wealthy and important plantation owners who lived on the island.¹⁷⁰ Detailed minutes of the Barbados council have survived for the period from 1654-58, allowing us to analyse the number of merchants who were represented at the height of the sugar boom. In 1654, two out of five members of Daniel Searle's council had strong connections to the London merchant community: Edward Thomson (the brother of Maurice Thomson) and Thomas Middleton (who would later sign petitions in London as a 'Barbados merchant'). By 1658 John Colleton was the only person on a six-man council who can be described as having close familial connections to merchants in England, and by this point he is probably more aptly described as a planter anyway.¹⁷¹ This is suggestive of a wider trend. Out of the sixty men who served on the Barbados Council between 1630 and 1660, I

¹⁶⁷ For the duties of the secretary, see *Minutes of the Council of Barbados, 1654-1658*, p. 63, pp. 84-85, p. 142; *Thurloe Papers*, Vol. 3., pp. 157-159, Mr. J. Berkenhead to secretary Thurloe, 17 February 1653/54.

¹⁶⁸ Spurdle, *Early West Indian Government*, p. 29; Gragg, *Englishmen Transplanted*, pp. 66-67.

¹⁶⁹ Gragg, *Englishmen Transplanted*, pp. 67-68.

¹⁷⁰ Library of Congress, Charles Pinfold Papers, 'Extracts from the Council Books in Barbados', 13 October 1641. The thirteen members of Governor Phillip Bell's council in October 1641 were: Capt. James Browne, Capt. James Holdip, Capt. Thomas Gibbes, Capt. George Boyer, Capt. John Reade, Capt. Edmond Reade, Capt. Phillip Woodhouse, Capt. William Hilliard, Capt. Edward Whelley, Mr. Phillip Tilney, Mr. Edward Cranfield, Mr. Thomas Trott, Mr. William Kirton. The secretary was William Povey Esqr.

¹⁷¹ For examples, see *Barbados Council Minutes*, p. 5, 320.

have been able to identify just seven who were family members and business partners of London merchants: Edward Cranfield, Edward Thomson, Thomas Middleton, John Colleton, Edmund Read, John Read, and Constant Sylvester.¹⁷² Although in the mid-1650s Thomas Noell, the brother and business partner of Martin Noell, did occupy the position of secretary to the council.¹⁷³

There were, of course, others who served on the council that maintained close business relationships with London merchants, but it would be a push to suggest that men such as James Drax were actively seeking to further merchant interests in the colony's political institutions. Also important to note is that merchants who lived on Barbados itself and whose main base of business operations were also on the island served on the council. A good example is Henry Sweet, described as a London merchant in 1647 when he was dealing in the production of Barbadian indigo in partnership with fellow merchant Oliver Read, but by the mid-1650s was a permanent resident of the colony and served as a member of the council during the years 1654-58.¹⁷⁴ Those merchants who relocated to Barbados were a group distinct from the absentee London merchants who financed the sugar boom but never visited the Caribbean. Their significance to the island's history will be explored in greater detail in Chapter Five. Overall, the underrepresentation of absentee merchants and their representatives on the Barbados council did not change after 1660.¹⁷⁵ An oligarchy of planters, not London merchants, dominated this institution in the era of the sugar boom.

A similar pattern prevailed in the other chamber of Barbadian government. The Barbados Assembly was first convened by Governor Henry Hawley in 1639. The assembly was an elected body of the island's plantation-owners: all freeholders (propertied men who owned over ten acres of land) were eligible to vote and stand for election. Two planters from each of the island's eleven parishes were elected to serve, meaning that when full the assembly consisted of twenty-two members. Over time specialised roles

¹⁷² For a list of the sixty men who served on the Barbados council between 1630 and 1660, see Gragg, *Englishmen Transplanted*, p. 65, fn. 30.

¹⁷³ For Thomas Noell as secretary to the Barbados Council, see *Barbados Council Minutes*, p. 80.

¹⁷⁴ Sometimes spelt 'Henry Sweete'. For the 1647 reference see BDA, RB 3/3, pp. 195-196. For Sweet as a member of the Barbados Council, see *Barbados Council Minutes*, p. 173, 176.

¹⁷⁵ TNA, CO 31/1, 'Journal of the Proceedings of the Governor and Council of Barbados, from the 29 May 1660 to the 30 November 1686'.

within the assembly emerged, including a speaker and clerk. In its early years the assembly functioned merely as an advisory body to the council. It was not until 1641 that the new governor Phillip Bell gave the assembly powers to initiate legislation itself, so long as the laws passed were not 'repugnant' to those of England. This was a decision of constitutional significance, because it gave the local inhabitants the ability to have a greater say in their own government. The Barbadian model of popular participation in government through an elected assembly would be emulated at other islands in the English Caribbean over the next twenty years.¹⁷⁶

There is little evidence to suggest that London merchants held sway over the Barbadian assembly between the 1640s and 1660s. No minutes of the assembly have survived before the mid-1660s, and so the only way we can understand which interests were represented within this institution beforehand is by analysing its membership. The earliest source we have which lists the members of the assembly dates to the eve of the sugar boom in September 1643.¹⁷⁷ When we investigate the backgrounds of the 26 men who served on the assembly in 1643 it becomes clear that, like the council, planters far outnumbered the agents of absentee London merchants. Just four members had familial connections to London merchants or were their agents: Edmund Read, John Read, Robert Jennings, and Thomas Le Gay.¹⁷⁸ Out of the sixteen sitting members of the assembly of 5 November 1651 there were two men with familial ties to absentee merchants: Robert Hooper and William Heathcott.¹⁷⁹ John Wadloe, Thomas Read, and Symon Lambert were merchants living on the island who served in this assembly.¹⁸⁰ In July 1655 there were two agents of London merchants sitting on the assembly: William Vassall and Benjamin Keyzar. Also

¹⁷⁶ Antigua in 1644; St. Christopher in 1647; and Montserrat by 1660. Spurdle, *Early West Indian Government*, p. 11.

¹⁷⁷ NRS, Hay Papers, GD34/923/38, 'Letter from the Inhabitants of Barbados to the Earle of Carlilse touching the three pound per acre', 13 September 1643.

¹⁷⁸ Edmund and John Read were the relation of Thomas Read, a London merchant involved in sugar production with both Martin Noell and Thomas Applewhaite in the 1640s. See BDA, RB 3/3, pp. 529-31; BDA, RB 3/5, pp. 680-81; BDA, RB 3/3, pp. 873-74. In 1646 John Jennings, alongside George Bowen, was a factor for Thomas Preston 'citizen and skinner of London' and Philip Streethay 'citizen and ironmonger of London', see BDA, RB 3/3, pp. 79-80. Thomas Le Gay (sometimes spelt Gaye or Legay) was almost certainly a relation of the English merchants Peter and Isaac Le Gay who were heavy investors in the sugar boom. BDA, RB 3/5, pp. 329-331.

¹⁷⁹ For the list of assemblymen, see TNA, CO 1/11, ff. 103-104. For Hooper, see LMA, MCD Box 2, CLA/024/06/002. For Heathcott, who was the brother of the Bristol merchant Thomas Heathcott, see BDA, RB 3/3, p. 697.

¹⁸⁰ For evidence that these three assemblymen were merchants living on Barbados, see BDA, RB 3/3, pp. 585-88; BDA, RB 3/2, p. 265; BDA, RB 3/5, pp. 680-81. Thomas Read, formerly a London merchant, had relocated to Barbados by 1651.

significant is that the representatives for St. Michael parish, which contained the commercial hub of Bridgetown, were both merchants: William Vassall and John Wadloe.¹⁸¹ By 1666 Constant Silvester was the only agent of a merchant investor in the mid-century sugar boom who sat on the assembly. There is no evidence in the minutes of the assembly for 1666 that either London merchants or merchants living on Barbados itself used the body's legislative powers to further their private business interests at the expense of planters.¹⁸²

The overall impression given by the composition of the Barbados council and assembly is that London merchants either struggled to control, or perhaps did not even attempt to control, institutions of colonial government in which appointment was determined locally. Their distance from the Caribbean meant that this was beyond their reach. Absentee London merchants were more successful, however, in placing their representatives in offices appointed by commission from England, because they could more immediately use the political influence they wielded in Westminster to further their efforts.

The position of Provost Marshal was most significant in this regard. Originally a Tudor military office, by the late sixteenth century the Provost Marshal was increasingly being used by the English state as a means of deploying martial law against its own citizens, such as to discipline vagrants.¹⁸³ In its seventeenth-century colonial manifestation the Provost Marshal was a full-time salaried office which gave extensive powers to oversee law enforcement and the administration of justice.¹⁸⁴ Absentee merchant investors in the sugar boom believed that a Provost Marshal sympathetic to their interests was necessary for providing favourable conditions for the operation of colonial trade. This was because there was no legal apparatus

¹⁸¹ *Barbados Council Minutes*, pp. 84-85. The assembly had not changed much in membership when they petitioned the Lord Protector in March 1657. This source provides historians with another list of names of assemblymen. See *Thurloe Papers*, Vol. 4, p. 651, 'The assembly at Barbados to the protector', 27 March 1656.

¹⁸² TNA, CO 1/20, ff. 4-10.

¹⁸³ For the Provost Marshal as a martial law office in early modern England and its role in managing vagrancy, see Lindsay Boynton, *The Elizabethan Militia, 1558-1638* (Abingdon, 1967), p. 150, 250, 295; A. L. Beier, *Masterless Men: The Vagrancy Problem in England, 1560-1640* (London, 1985), pp. 152-153; Paul Slack, *The English Poor Law 1531-1782* (London, 1990), p. 23.

¹⁸⁴ For the colonial uses of martial law and military government, see Stephen Saunders Webb, *The Governors-General: The English Army and the Definition of the Empire, 1569-1681* (Chapel Hill, 1979). The duties of the Provost Marshal on Barbados are outlined in a document in the Colonial Office Records: 'The Provost Marshalls place is in nature of sherife of a County regard he keeps the Goale [jail] and by himself or Deputies Executes all Writts and Execucons'. TNA, CO 1/18, f. 87.

on Barbados itself which allowed absentee merchants to easily and swiftly collect the debts they were owed from planters. As we have already seen, extensions of credit from London merchants were crucial for the expansion of the sugar industry and enabled trade with Barbados to function efficiently. Credit was the foundation of the Barbadian economy. It was an intricate web of debt and obligation which tied planters living in the colony to merchants based in the metropole.¹⁸⁵ With almost every planter indebted to English merchants, courts on the island tended to treat delinquent debtors with leniency, meaning that by the mid-1650s absentee merchants were struggling to collect debts, and deemed it essential to have an amenable government which would uphold their right to do so.¹⁸⁶ Placing allies in the position of Provost Marshall was particularly important for English merchants, therefore, as this office gave the holder the power to imprison and seize the estates of planters who were indebted.

Prior to 1657 the perquisite to appoint a new Provost Marshal was controlled locally by the Governor and Council of Barbados.¹⁸⁷ But that year, largely as a result of the lobbying efforts of the London merchants Martin Noell and Thomas Povey, this customary right was revoked. Against the wishes of the governor and inhabitants of Barbados, Noell and Povey successfully obtained a commission from the Lord Protector granting their ally William Povey the office of Provost Marshal.¹⁸⁸ As Carla Pestana has observed, this decision was controversial precisely because it had broad implications. It altered the island's unwritten constitution, and thereby 'disturbed the accepted relationship between the periphery and the center' in the English empire.¹⁸⁹ This decision also constituted a major victory for English merchants who traded to Barbados, because it promised to install a judicial system more amenable to their interests.

¹⁸⁵ For a contemporary description of the importance of merchant credit to the Barbadian economy, see TNA, CO 1/13, f. 148.

¹⁸⁶ For examples, see *Barbados Council Minutes*, p. 37; TNA, CO 1/14, f. 167; TNA, CO 1/15, f. 47; *APCC*, no. 595, pp. 351-355.

¹⁸⁷ For examples, see NRS, Hay Papers, GD34/923/19, 'James Hay from Barbados touching the Governor's harsh dealing with him in deposing him from this place', 14 February 1641; GD34/923/16, James Hay to Archibald Hay, 6 October 1638; *Barbados Council Minutes*, p. 81. For the Provost Marshal's Oath, see BDA, RB 3/1, f. 2.

¹⁸⁸ For William Povey's first patent to be provost marshal of Barbados, see BL, Egerton MS 2395, f. 131. For his second patent, dated 1657, see BL, Add. Ms. 11411, ff. 35-38.

¹⁸⁹ Pestana, *English Atlantic in an Age of Revolution*, p. 168.

William Povey's rapid career advancement in the island's administration was entirely down to his personal connections with powerful merchants in the City of London through his brother Thomas. Thomas Povey, a sugar boom investor and important figure in London's expanding colonial bureaucracy, capitalised on his political influence with Cromwell to secure offices for family members in the Caribbean, including that of Barbados Provost Marshal for William Povey.¹⁹⁰ Noell wrote to William Povey in November 1655 to explain how his brother in London 'hath made it his continuall business to prevent any prejudice which might befall you here and to gaine you a confirmation from his Highness'.¹⁹¹ From Thomas Povey's perspective, it was impossible for William 'to stand unless you have one foot in England, as well as in Barbados'.¹⁹²

Securing the appointment of a family member to the office of Provost Marshal was intended support the Noell syndicate's sugar trading business. What Thomas Povey and Martin Noell did not anticipate though, was how intransigent and negligent William would be. Thomas Povey sought financial compensation for helping his brother to secure confirmation of his office from Cromwell. He believed that he deserved a proportion of the monetary proceeds from his brother's lucrative new position in the colonial administration. But William ignored these requests and refused to pay. Their dispute got so bad that communication between the two brothers eventually broke down. Letters were dispatched to Governor Searle imploring him to intervene, and in 1659 Martin Noell and Thomas Povey were forced to send Edward Bradbourne to the island as their new agent.¹⁹³ The vast distances separating Barbados and England, and the opportunities this afforded local inhabitants to pursue their private interests, had once again hampered the efforts of London merchants to run the colony in a way which suited their trading businesses.

¹⁹⁰ Thomas Povey also secured the office of Commissary General of Provisions on Jamaica for his other brother Richard Povey in 1657. See BL, Add. Ms. 11411, ff. 16-17.

¹⁹¹ BL, Add. Ms. 11411, f. 7, Martin Noell to William Povey, 22 November 1655.

¹⁹² BL, Add. Ms. 11411, f. 8, Thomas Povey to William Povey, 10 November 1655. See also BL, Add. Ms. 11411, ff. 6-7, Thomas Povey to Daniel Searle, [n.d. November 1655?].

¹⁹³ For examples, see BL, Add. Ms. 11411, ff. 38-41, Thomas Povey to William Povey, 20 August 1657; BL, Add. Ms. 11411, f. 43, Martin Noell to William Povey, 27 August 1657; BL, Add. Ms. 11411, ff. 45-47 Martin Noell to Daniel Searle, 27 August 1657; BL, Egerton MS 2395, f. 239, Letter of Attorney by Thomas Povey, 9 February 1659/60; BL, Egerton Ms. 2395, f. 240, 'Instruction to Thomas Noell Esq concerning the settling some matters in difference between Mr Thomas Povey and Mr William Povey', [n.d. February 1659/60?].

The desire of London merchants to control the office of Provost Marshal on Barbados did not subside after the Restoration. Francis Craddock, another man with close ties to the London merchant community, secured a commission for the position in August 1660.¹⁹⁴ In 1670 Edwyn Stede, who would later become the Barbados factor for the Royal African Company and Governor of Barbados (1685-90), succeeded Craddock as Provost Marshal.¹⁹⁵ Disagreement over whether appointment to the office should be made locally or by commission from the King also persisted.¹⁹⁶

Below the Provost Marshal were locally appointed judges and justices of the peace (JPs) who ran the Barbadian judicial system on a day-to-day basis and assisted in safeguarding law and order. In the era of the sugar boom we see the representatives of London merchants serving in these public offices, again primarily because of their commercial utility in aiding with debt collection. By the early 1650s the island had been divided into five precincts to share the ever-mounting pile of litigation. The Court of Common Pleas on Barbados, which like its English equivalent used case precedent as a means of meting out justice, dealt with debt suits, contested land titles, and disputes over the inheritance of estates.¹⁹⁷ Both John Colleton and William Vassall, the brother of London merchant Samuel Vassall, appear in the council minutes as a judge in the Common Pleas court for the precinct of St. Michael in 1654.¹⁹⁸ Thomas Noell was a judge for the precinct of Christchurch in 1654, a region on the southern coast of the island where his brother Martin owned a 300-acre plantation. By July 1655 he had taken up the position of judge for St. Michael precinct. This office was almost certainly secured through the political influence of his brother Martin in London, because Thomas was promoted following a 'Governor's Patten from His Highness ye Lord Protector'.¹⁹⁹ It is significant that three men with close ties to the London merchant community served as judges in St. Michael at the height of the sugar boom, because this precinct contained Bridgetown, the commercial hub and political centre of Barbados, and was therefore where a lot of debt cases involving merchants were heard. With regard to JPs, a lesser office which gave high standing

¹⁹⁴ For his commissions, see TNA, CO 1/14, ff. 73-83; TNA, CO 1/16, f. 98.

¹⁹⁵ TNA, CO 1/25, f. 73; TNA, CO 1/27, f. 86. See also Dunn, *Sugar and Slaves*, p. 101.

¹⁹⁶ For examples, see TNA, CO 1/16, f. 201; TNA, CO 1/18, f. 87; TNA, CO 1/25, f. 14.

¹⁹⁷ Gragg, *Englishmen Transplanted*, p. 59.

¹⁹⁸ *Barbados Council Minutes*, p. 19, 31-32.

¹⁹⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 63, 80, 84-85, 142, 244; *Thurloe Papers* Vol. 5., p. 43, 'Mr. J. Berkenhead to Secretary Thurloe', 17 February 1654/55.

members of the community powers to maintain public order at local level, we see John Colleton, John Parris, and Constant Silvester all being nominated to serve between 1654 and 1658.²⁰⁰

We have some evidence which indicates that the relatives of London merchants used their appointments to the Barbados judiciary to assist merchants in collecting debts. In 1654, for example, when the merchant Ralph Woorye specifically requested to be adjudicated by a jury of merchants rather than planters, the presiding judge and merchant John Colleton acquiesced without hesitation.²⁰¹ While in September 1655 the complaints of ‘severall Judges’ and ‘Merchants trading hither’ were voiced regarding the ‘unsufferable procrastinations and delaye of Justice’ on the island, which they argued was to the ‘prejudice of ye creditor’. As a result of their protests, Governor Searle ordered that the colony’s judicial system should henceforth ‘carry a nearer resemblance and consonacy with ye practice of ye Lawes of England for ye expediateing of Justice’, and for the martials of the court to be more proactive in arresting delinquent debtors.²⁰² Moreover, because merchants and their representatives were deeply involved in law enforcement and presiding over court proceedings in the era of the sugar boom, they played a role in the implementation of the rigorous Barbados slave codes. In 1655, for example, a special court of Oyer and Terminer was formed for the ‘hearing, examination and tryall of all negroes that shall be brought before them either for murther or any other crime’. The ship captain John Wadloe, who regularly traded to West Africa for slaves in the 1640s and 1650s, was one of five men appointed to sit on the new court.²⁰³

We have seen how London merchants cultivated a close working relationship with successive governors of Barbados, and also successfully installed their family members and representatives to the office of Provost Marshal and positions in the colonial judiciary. But did this enable absentee merchants to exert political and commercial authority over the colony in the mid-seventeenth century? When it comes to politics, the answer is a resounding no. Appointment to the two law-making institutions on Barbados (the council and assembly) was determined locally. Although merchant-dominated establishments at the centre

²⁰⁰ *Barbados Council Minutes*, pp. 257-259.

²⁰¹ *Ibid.*, p. 34.

²⁰² *Ibid.*, p. 99.

²⁰³ *Ibid.*, p. 90.

of the empire, such as the Council of Foreign Plantations, could send strongly worded instructions to the Governor, Council, and Assembly to alter laws, the power implement legislation remained firmly in the hands of planters living overseas. The colonial inhabitants of Barbados vehemently defended their customary privileges to elect their own representatives and fashion their own laws, often claiming that civic participation was their right as 'freeborn Englishmen'.²⁰⁴ The inability of the representatives of London merchants to prevent planters from driving a profitable provisioning trade with the Dutch and French provides further evidence that merchants were mostly unsuccessful in their endeavour to leverage political and commercial influence on Barbados itself.²⁰⁵ Although beyond the remit of this dissertation, it would be interesting to explore in a future project how influential the factors of the Royal African Company were in the political institutions of Barbados after 1672, and whether this deviated from the pattern described here.

Evidence from the turn of the eighteenth century that merchants were still struggling to collect their debts from planters on the island suggests that the efforts of merchant investors in the sugar boom to use the position of Provost Marshal and the judiciary to secure themselves commercial advantages failed in the long run. For example, in a lengthy diatribe about the 'present state of justice in the American plantations, and particularly in the Island of Barbados', an anonymous author explained how 'severall English merchants have heretofore employed great summes on plantations in that Island, but many of them having been great sufferers and many others ruined for want of justice in the Island'. The author even placed part of blame on the untrustworthiness of the factors and relatives that merchants sent overseas to manage their investments:

It is grown a proverb with the English Merchants, that if a man goes over never so honest to the plantations, yet the very air there does change him in a short time; and it is certain they have too

²⁰⁴ Pestana, *English Atlantic in an Age of Revolution*, pp. 163-170.

²⁰⁵ BL, Add. Ms. 11411, f. 13, Thomas Povey to Daniel Searle [c. 1655?].

much ground for this complaint, tho not occasioned by the air, but by the universall corruption of justice among them.²⁰⁶

Conclusion

This chapter has argued that absentee English merchants, and especially those in the City of London, did not just forge a commercial relationship with Barbados in the era of the sugar boom. To preserve their financial investments in the island, London merchants also sought to influence the political direction of the colony, and make its government amenable to their interests. The ability of these merchants to affect policy change in Westminster increased over time, as the representation of investors in the sugar boom within institutions to govern trade and plantations improved after 1653. By the early 1660s merchant financiers of the sugar boom were heavily represented on the Council of Foreign Plantations. One result of this development was that the advice offered by an association of ‘Barbados merchants’ in their petitions began to be implemented more often by the English government. I have argued that the ‘Barbados merchants’ were an informal pressure group formed by absentee merchant investors in the sugar boom, and was a progenitor of the eighteenth-century West India Interest. The reason why the ‘Barbados merchants’ were more successful in their lobbying after 1660 was principally because many of their affiliates were now sitting on the Council of Foreign Plantations, and could use that body as an institutional mechanism for airing their opinions and implementing policy change in the metropole. Despite securing increased political power in Westminster during our period of enquiry, absentee merchant investors in the sugar boom were not able to exert similar levels of authority on Barbados itself. This was despite the concerted efforts of London merchants to place allies in the office of Provost Marshall, which would have helped them to collect the debts they were owed from planters.

²⁰⁶ BL, Add. Ms. 27382, f. 193, ‘The present state of justice in the American plantations, and particularly in the Island of Barbados’, [c. 1700].

This speaks to wider debates surrounding centre and periphery in early modern empires. London merchants and the English state were never able to govern Barbados directly in the mid-seventeenth century: the vast distances separating England from the Caribbean and the resistance of colonists to metropolitan authority meant that planters retained power over the law-making process through their control of the local institutions of colonial government. These factors scuppered the plans drawn up by merchant investors in the sugar boom to increase the English state's central control over Barbados after 1650. As Jack P. Greene has correctly observed, the early English empire was a negotiated one: metropolitan merchants and colonial planters had very different opinions about what constituted the nature of empire, and had conflicting visions for its future.²⁰⁷ Tension in the relationship between colony and metropole turned out to be productive, as by the mid-eighteenth century the British American colonies enjoyed great prosperity, which some contemporary observers such as Adam Smith and Montesquieu suggested was down to the degree of political autonomy they possessed.²⁰⁸ For the absentee merchant investors in the sugar boom who are the subject of this study, however, the inability to impose centralised governance over Barbados and to govern the colony in a way which suited their investments was a source of continual frustration. In fact, in the next chapter I will argue that it was one of the main reasons why we see them pulling their investments out of Barbados in the late 1650s and early 1660s.

²⁰⁷ Jack P. Greene, *Peripheries and Center: Constitutional Development in the Extended Politics of the British Empire and the United States, 1607–1788* (Athens, GA, 1986). See also Christine Daniels and Michael V. Kennedy, eds, *Negotiated Empires: Centers and Peripheries in the Americas, 1500–1820* (Abingdon, 2002).

²⁰⁸ Jack P. Greene, 'Transatlantic Colonization and the Redefinition of Empire in the Early Modern Era', in Daniels and Kennedy, eds, *Negotiated Empires*, pp. 274–275.

Chapter Five. Merchants and Barbados in the Restoration Empire, 1660-1672

The fifth and final chapter of this dissertation investigates how the relationship between merchants and Barbados changed after the Restoration. In the first section we will begin by considering why London merchants withdrew their investments from Barbadian land in the 1650s and early 1660s, and what the implications of this were. We will then proceed to examine where this merchant capital went after it was removed from Barbados. By tracing the careers of the merchant investors in the sugar boom beyond the Restoration, it will be shown how some of the profits English merchants generated from sugar and slavery on Barbados were reinvested in the Jamaican economy, used to purchase stock in overseas trading companies like the EIC, and deposited with goldsmith-bankers in England such as Edward Backwell. The second section of this chapter will explore how, following the withdrawal of merchant capital from Barbados, the role of the island within the structure of England's seventeenth-century empire changed. Rather than acting as a site for wealthy London merchants to invest their capital, by 1672 the colony had become significant as both a centre of plantation production and as a regional centre of trade. The process through which Barbados was transformed into a hub of imperial, intercolonial, and transnational commerce began around the year 1650, in the immediate aftermath of the initial stages of the sugar boom.

The island's own merchant community expanded in importance and size in the 1650s, as foreign traders relocated to the colony and the factors of English merchants increasingly began to trade on their own accounts. Barbadian merchants were particularly assertive participants in Atlantic commerce: they drove a direct trade with other Caribbean islands, the Guianas, New England, and West Africa. Partly as a result of the rise of the Barbadian merchant community, Barbados also took on some more specialised roles in the English empire during the 1660s. The island functioned as a commercial entrepot in the slave trade to Spanish America and became a nursery for further colonial expansion in the Greater Caribbean. By 1672 the port town of Bridgetown had become a bustling commercial hub, and the tiny island of Barbados had

been transformed into a pivot point in world trade. Indeed, in 1676 one author described Barbados as ‘the most flourishing colony the English have in the World’.¹

1. The Withdrawal of Merchant Capital

In the 1650s and early 1660s we begin to see London merchants withdrawing the investments they had made in Barbadian land during the tumultuous civil war years of the 1640s. William Pennoyer was one of the first to sell up: in 1653 he sold his sugar plantation to William Johnson for the tidy sum of 65,000 lb. of sugar.² William Williams, the Levant and East India Company trader who had speculated in Barbados sugar production in 1646, also sold his share in a plantation in 1653.³ George Standfast sold much of his land and enslaved Africans in 1658 before returning to Bristol.⁴ Martin Noell, the biggest merchant investor in the sugar boom, soon followed suit. Beginning with the sale of the enormous 510-acre Mt. Clapham Plantation to Governor Daniel Searle in June 1657, which involved the transfer of 328,000 lb. of muscovado sugar, Noell and his brothers began to sell off their properties in Bridgetown and plantations in the rural parishes of Barbados. By 1661 Martin Noell had even auctioned off his share of the lucrative 270-acre Spring Plantation in St. Joseph Parish.⁵ The fragmentary nature of the deed records at the Barbados Department of Archives means that we do not know the specific dates on which every London merchant sold up their landholdings. But we can say with some degree of certainty that Maurice Thomson, Andrew Riccard, and Edwin Browne did not retain a direct financial interest in sugar production beyond the Restoration, although they did continue to trade with the colony and remained

¹ Anon., *Great newes from the Barbadoes, or, A True and faithful account of the grand conspiracy of the Negroes against the English and the happy discovery of the same with the number of those that were burned alive, beheaded, and otherwise executed for their horrid crimes: with a short discription of that plantation* (London, 1676), p. 1.

² BDA, RB3/2, pp. 806-808.

³ *Complete Book of Emigrants*, p. 366.

⁴ Gragg, *Englishmen Transplanted*, p. 136.

⁵ BDA, RB 3/3, pp. 109-114; BDA, RB 3/2, pp. 534-537. Martin Noell did retain a half share in the Homehall Plantation, which he renounced control of while on his deathbed and drafting his will on 23 September 1665. For Noell's will, see BDA, RB6/10, ff. 499-507.

involved with marketing and finance. There were some London merchants, however, who bucked the trend by continuing to maintain absentee proprietorship over their plantations into the 1660s: Richard Batson, Thomas Frere, Jonathan Andrews, and Luke Lucie. Others travelled across the Atlantic to set up permanent residence on the island and manage their sugar estates themselves, in the process founding some of the major Barbadian planter dynasties: Thomas Kendall, Thomas Applewhaite, John Colleton, Samuel Farmer, and John Worsam.⁶ But we can be fairly confident that the general trend was towards English merchants relinquishing control over their Barbadian plantations in the 1650s and 1660s.

Why did so many of the absentee merchants who had financed the expansion of the Barbados sugar industry during the 1640s sell off much of their landed investments in the 1650s and early 1660s? Russell Menard has suggested it was principally because 'running a complex sugar-making enterprise at the edge of empire from its metropolitan center was a difficult and troubling business'. Complications associated with absentee plantation-ownership are well known to historians of the eighteenth-century empire. Menard was thus correct to argue that when sugar prices on Barbados began to dip in the 1650s (from 50s. per hundredweight in 1646 to 15s. in 1661) some London merchants decided that managing plantations through untrustworthy attorneys was more trouble than it was worth.⁷

There may have been a more specific reason too. As we saw in Chapter Four, there were concerted efforts made by London merchants in the second half of the 1650s to centralise the governance of Barbados through the formation of a West India Council or West India Company. This was in response to the fractious political situation in the colony earlier in the decade which, as the admonitions of the 'Barbados merchants' in their petitions demonstrate, was perceived as posing a risk to invested capital. The inability of London merchants to implement their reform projects and govern the colony in a way which suited their interests was a major blow, and I do not think it is a coincidence that they began to withdraw their investments from Barbadian land in the years immediately following the failure of these

⁶ Menard, *Sweet Negotiations*, pp. 60-61, 147-148.

⁷ *Ibid.*, pp. 60-61, 69. On the difficulties and inefficiencies of absentee plantation ownership in the eighteenth century, see Lowell J. Ragatz, *The Fall of the Planter Class in the British Caribbean, 1763-1833* (New York, 1928), p. 44; Pares, *Merchants and Planters*, pp. 42-44; Dunn, *Sugar and Slaves*, p 200; Andrew J. O'Shaughnessy, *An Empire Divided: The American Revolution and the British Caribbean* (Philadelphia, 2000), pp. 4-5.

centralisation schemes. It is important to highlight that there were also positive reasons for absentee merchants to sell their landholdings when they did. By selling up in the early 1660s London merchants were following the business tradition of 'buying low, selling high', because one of the consequences of the sugar boom was that alluvial land on Barbados was now worth much more than ten years previously.⁸ The capital merchants had poured into improving their plantations through the construction of sugar refineries and the purchasing of enslaved Africans, indentured servants, and draught animals meant that their plantations were especially valuable. The decision made by many London merchants to sell up in the late 1650s and early 1660s was probably due to an assortment of interrelated factors, therefore, including the difficulties associated with managing a plantation from afar, the failure to implement their programme for centralising the colony's government, a recent fall in sugar prices which made being involved in its production a less attractive proposition, and the profits that could be generated from the sale of their plantations.

The significance of London merchants selling off their land on Barbados was that they were no longer directly involved in plantation production. This underscores how, beginning in the 1660s, we start to see a more defined division of labour between planters and merchants in the Barbadian commercial system. In the first stages of England's overseas expansion the distinctions between planters and merchants were not always clear. As we saw in Chapter Three, many of the first planters on Barbados were entrepreneurs with a mercantile background, who continued to engage in trade while managing their plantations. Moreover, English merchants tended to operate as independent traders in the Atlantic and, like planters, accumulated land in the American colonies through 'headright' policies or by directly purchasing plantations, the latter of which was the case on Barbados in the 1640s.

The indistinct margins between merchants and planters which had existed in prior years began to change on Barbados in the 1660s due to the economic impact of the sugar boom. As several historians have observed, planters used their newfound wealth to modify the way they conducted business: rather than

⁸ For changing Barbadian land prices, see McCusker and Menard, 'The Sugar Industry in the Seventeenth Century', p. 299.

selling their crops to the factors of English merchants on Barbados for immediate pay, in the 1660s planters instead began to bear the risk of the Atlantic crossing themselves and to consign their goods to commission agents in London. Although this delayed when they received payment, it enabled planters to focus their attention on sugar cultivation and plantation management, while also squeezing more profit out of their crop by retailing their sugar in London where prices were higher. There were two contextual reasons why affluent planters began to change their business practices. First, was the steep fall in sugar prices in colonial markets that occurred in the late 1650s, which meant it made financial sense for planters to dispatch their tropical commodities for sale in London where there were superior market conditions. Second, were the mercantilist reforms initiated by the Crown through the passage of the second Navigation Act (1660) and the Staple Act (1663). By listing sugar as an enumerated commodity that could only be exported to English ports, and by specifying that manufactured commodities from Europe destined for the American colonies had to be transhipped through England, these pieces of legislation both restricted the market options available to planters and helped to funnel customs revenue into the state's coffers. As part of their effort to prosper within the confines of these new limitations planters chose to concentrate their attentions on the London market, which was the most competitive in England and proximate to the nation's financial centre. They also hired agents to represent their interests there, who formed the nucleus of the formal West India Interest which emerged in the 1670s.⁹

In a turn of events which happened more or less simultaneously, merchants in London who had financed the sugar boom began to retreat from direct involvement in plantation production on Barbados. The fact that merchant investors in the sugar boom were chief backers of the proposal to implement the 4.5 percent duty on Barbadian exports in the early 1660s, which acted as a major disincentive for planters, provides further evidence for how London merchants were moving away from being directly involved in sugar production in this period.¹⁰ This set a precedent for subsequent generations of merchants who

⁹ Davies, 'Origins of the Commission System', pp. 102-104; Pares, *Merchants and Planters*, pp. 33-37; Penson, *The Colonial Agents*, pp. 10-12; Sheridan, *Sugar and Slavery*, pp. 282-285, 328-329; McCusker and Menard, *Economy of British America*, pp. 161-162; Nash, 'The Organization of Trade and Finance', pp. 98-99, 106-108; Menard, *Sweet Negotiations*, pp. 102-103. The growth of absenteeism among Barbadian sugar magnates, who relocated to England to live a life of luxury, also enlarged the population of men with Caribbean connections in London willing to become paid agents.

¹⁰ See Chapter Four of this dissertation.

tended to specialise in the finance and marketing side of plantation business, often as commission agents for planters. These developments had far-reaching significance for the future organisation of trade in the British Empire, as they facilitated the emergence of the commission system of merchandising. My interpretation differs from the historiographical consensus, as historians have tended to view Barbadian planters as the main innovators of the commission system.¹¹ But I argue that the business decisions made by London merchants in the 1660s to retreat from plantation production played a greater role in this process than has been previously understood. A more pronounced division of labour between planters and merchants was crucial to the development and operation of the commission system, which by the eighteenth century provided the structural basis for trade between London and all the American colonies.

Seventeenth-century commission agents performed a variety of duties in London for their Caribbean clients. First and foremost, the agent supervised the marketing and sale of sugar. In return for a cut of the profits (usually between 2.5 and 4%), the agent received consignments of sugar from his client at the port of London, paid all fees associated with customs, freight, insurance, wharfage, and warehousing, before finally organising the sale of the sugar, either by himself or through brokers. The proceeds of this sale would then either be sent to his client in the Caribbean or, depending on instructions, arrangements would be made for setting some capital aside for purchasing plantation supplies, indentured servants, and consumer goods to be sent over on the return voyage. Commission agents also functioned as bankers by maintaining a current account of their client's debits and credits. This enabled planters in the Caribbean to draw bills of exchange on their London agent, which creditors could then deposit to secure payment.¹²

Kinship and business connections to the Caribbean planter class were usually required to succeed as a commission agent. This meant that absentee planters and London merchants were those most commonly employed in this capacity. Indeed, some of the first London commission agents have identifiable links to

¹¹ E.g. Ralph Davies, 'The Origins of the Commission System'; Sheridan, *Sugar and Slavery*, pp. 283-283; Menard, *Sweet Negotiations*, pp. 102-103. The only exception is Nuala Zahedieh. She has argued that falling commodity prices convinced London merchants to let planters shoulder a greater share of the risk in the sugar trade. Zahedieh, *Capital and the Colonies*, pp. 79-80.

¹² Sheridan, *Sugar and Slavery*, pp. 282-288, 328-332; Hancock, *Citizens of the World*, pp. 123-131; Menard, *Sweet Negotiations*, pp. 102-103.

merchant investors in the sugar boom and the Barbadian merchant community. John Bawden, the leading commission agent in Restoration London, began his career as a merchant on Barbados in the 1660s, before returning to London around the year 1670 where he operated as an agent for numerous planters in the Caribbean.¹³ Another example is Jacob Lucie, the younger brother of Luke Lucie (a London merchant who had invested in the sugar boom), who in February 1672 was acting as a commission agent for Samuel Winthrop on Antigua.¹⁴

The rise of the commission system had one other long-term impact on the structure of commerce in the English Caribbean. It led to a decline in the role of 'merchant credit' in financing plantation development in the Caribbean colonies. When combined with the withdrawal of merchant capital from Barbados, this represented a major disjunction, because as we saw in Chapters Two and Three, the settlement of the English islands in the Caribbean and the beginnings of the sugar industry on Barbados were financed predominantly by direct investment and credit supplied by English merchants.

The volume of merchant credit extended to planters in the sugar colonies began to drop off markedly in the 1670s. This decade was when the commission system of merchandising became firmly entrenched as the means of organising Barbadian trade. Historians have found little evidence to suggest that commission agents extended long term credit to their planter-clients in the Caribbean between 1670 and 1730.¹⁵ Nuala Zahedieh, for instance, has persuasively argued that the capital needed to fund the development of the plantation system on Jamaica was mostly raised from local sources. She has used inventories and deeds to demonstrate how it was unusual for Jamaican planters to owe debts to creditors outside of the island. An internal credit market, through which wealthy planters offered loans to their less prosperous neighbours, proved more important than credit extended by London merchants to the financing of plantation development on Jamaica in the late seventeenth century.¹⁶ Moreover, the Royal

¹³ Bawden was named as drawee on 136 bills of exchange drawn up between Caribbean planters and the Royal African Company. Davies, 'Origins of the Commission System', p. 105 fn. 1; Sheridan, *Sugar and Slavery*, pp. 286-287.

¹⁴ Sheridan, *Sugar and Slavery*, p. 287.

¹⁵ Davies, 'Origins of the Commission System'; Nash, 'Organization of Trade and Finance', p. 122.

¹⁶ Zahedieh, 'Trade, Plunder, and Economic Development', p. 213. See also Pares, *Merchants and Planters*, p. 47; Sheridan, *Sugar and Slavery*, pp. 294-295; Burnard, *Planters, Merchants, and Slaves*, pp. 198-202.

African Company (RAC) was incorporated in 1672 and given the monopoly over the transatlantic slave trade. The RAC was the largest external creditor of Caribbean sugar planters in the late seventeenth century. The company supplied planters with their most expensive and desired commodity, African slave labour, which the majority of planters could only afford to purchase using bills of exchange drawn on their commission agents in London. Around the year 1700 the debts owed to the RAC peaked at between £160,000 and £170,000 sterling.¹⁷ But it would be wrong to characterise the credit extended by the RAC as a form of ‘merchant capital’. Although some merchant financiers of the sugar boom invested in the joint stock of the RAC’s predecessor company in 1663, historians agree that, on the whole, the company’s capital was supplied by the Stuart monarchy, courtiers, members of the English gentry, businessmen not involved in colonial trade, and money borrowed from London goldsmith-bankers.¹⁸

We have seen that merchant financiers of the sugar boom began to withdraw their investments in Barbadian land in the 1650s and early 1660s, and that this had implications for the organisation of imperial commerce with the island, as it played a part in the expansion of the commission system of merchandising. There was also a corresponding decline in the importance of merchant credit to financing plantation development in the Caribbean colonies between 1670 and 1730. A related question, which other historians have not posed, is what London merchants did after withdrawing their investments from land on Barbados. Or more specifically, where did they reinvest the profits they had generated through sugar and slavery over the past decade and a half? A lack of surviving account books means it is impossible to trace the movement of capital with precision, but some tentative conclusions can be made by analysing merchant careers. It is evident that some of the capital was used to purchase and renovate landed estates in the English countryside. In 1660, for instance, Sir Peter Lear used Barbadian sugar profits to buy the Lindridge estate, a lavish but now-demolished manor house in South Devon.¹⁹

¹⁷ Davies, ‘Origins of the Commission System’; Sheridan, *Sugar and Slaves*, pp. 285-286. Data quoted in Nash, ‘Organization of Trade and Finance’, p. 122.

¹⁸ Nash, ‘Organization of Trade and Finance’, p. 122.

¹⁹ http://www.lostheritage.org.uk/houses/lh_devon_lindridge.html (Accessed 29/09/2019).

Capital generated via the Barbados sugar boom also went to Jamaica, an island with cheap and abundant land, and therefore full of potential for developing a plantation economy and expanding the frontier of sugar production. The conquest of Jamaica, though a far more limited accomplishment than the projectors of the Western Design had originally hoped for, still represented a new commercial opportunity for London merchants. Between 1655 and 1670 merchants with investments in Barbados, including familiar figures such as Martin Noell, Andrew Riccard, and Edward Bushell, had begun to accumulate land there and integrate the new English colony within their commercial networks.²⁰ Noell was a particularly aggressive investor in the early Jamaican economy. He was instrumental in supplying Jamaica with necessary provisions soon after it had been conquered from the Spanish. In July 1656 he dispatched six ships to the colony, and as a reward for his assistance in executing the Western Design, Cromwell accorded Noell a huge 20,000-acre land grant on the island.²¹

It was not just London merchants who took Barbadian capital and expertise to Jamaica, however. Wealthy sugar planters, such as Thomas Modyford, were also pivotal to this process. Modyford, a royalist exile who had fled to Barbados in 1647, had by the late 1650s become rich through sugar production and a significant political player on the island, having served as speaker of the assembly and played a part in the co-ordination of the Western Design as a commissioner. Following the Restoration, he served as the chief African company factor on Barbados, before being appointed governor of Jamaica by the King in 1664. That year Modyford left Barbados for Jamaica with approximately 700 fellow planters and their enslaved Africans.²² Emigrants such as these were part of a wider 'Barbadian diaspora', which tentative estimates suggest numbered at around 10,000 people between 1650 and 1680.²³ This intercolonial migration flow disseminated capital, ideas, and institutions generated on Barbados during the sugar boom

²⁰ For Noell, see TNA, SP 25/77, f. 221. For Riccard, see TNA, CO 1/25, f. 227. For Bushell, see BL, Egerton Ms. 2395, f. 171; LMA, MCD Boxes 10 & 12.

²¹ TNA, SP 25/77, f. 221; TNA, CO 1/19, f. 42. For the 20,000-acre land grant on Jamaica, see *Thurloe Papers*, Vol. 4, pp. 634-635, 'Instructions unto Major General Fortescue, Vice-Admiral Goodson, Major Robert Sedgwick and Daniel Serle', [n.d. c. 1656].

²² Dunn, *Sugar and Slaves*, pp. 68-69, 154-155; Sheridan, *Sugar and Slavery*, pp. 75, 210-212.

²³ Dunn, *Sugar and Slaves*, p. 112.

elsewhere in the Caribbean basin and beyond, having an important influence on the historical trajectory of British America.²⁴

Given the sustained interest in Jamaica displayed by planters and merchants who had prospered through the Barbados sugar boom, one might expect that the island would have been rapidly transformed into a sugar producing colony. This was not the case: it took until the 1680s for a large-scale plantation economy and a commercial sugar industry to emerge on Jamaica. Historians have long wondered why the pre-eminent British sugar colony of the eighteenth century did not develop a plantation economy based around sugar production straight after its conquest from the Spanish in 1655.²⁵ Merchants and planters had bemoaned the lack of arable land on Barbados since the early 1650s, and were actively looking for more spacious alternatives for sugar cultivation at locations as far away as northern Madagascar.²⁶ The seizure of an island with a tropical climate which possessed abundant alluvial land should have generated frenzied speculation in the cultivation of sugar. Indeed, sugar cane had been grown in small plots by the Spanish long before the English conquest, and men who were well acquainted with the cultivation of the crop and the exploitation of large groups of enslaved Africans were either members of the invasion force or some of the earliest English settlers of Jamaica.

There are several reasons why the transition to a plantation economy on Jamaica was slow. There was a distinct lack of interest in clearing land and planting cash crops among the first English inhabitants of Jamaica. This disinclination to experiment with the cultivation of sugar was because there were profitable pursuits outside of the plantation sector which proved more attractive for most of the enterprising men living on the island. Wealth could be generated by organising privateering missions and participating in the entrepot trade with Spanish America, for example.²⁷ Moreover, when compared to Barbados, the

²⁴ Chandler, 'The Expansion of Barbados'; Dunn, *Sugar and Slaves*, pp. 110-116; Menard, *Sweet Negotiations*, ch. 6; Burnard, *Planters, Merchants, and Slaves*, pp. 36-37; Roberts, 'Surrendering Surinam'.

²⁵ Zahedieh, 'Trade, Plunder, and Economic Development', pp. 205-222; Eltis, *The Rise of African Slavery*, pp. 205-207; Burnard, *Planters, Merchants, and Slaves*, pp. 23-27; Roberts, 'Surrendering Surinam', pp. 248-254.

²⁶ E.g., Hunt, *The Island of Assada*.

²⁷ Nuala Zahedieh, 'The Merchants of Port Royal, Jamaica, and the Spanish Contraband Trade, 1655-1692,' *The William and Mary Quarterly*, Vol. 43, No. 4 (1986), pp. 570-593; Nuala Zahedieh, "'A Frugal, Prudential and Hopeful Trade": Privateering in Jamaica, 1655-89,' *The Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History*, Vol. 18, No. 2 (1990), pp. 145-168. Carla Pestana contends that the role of privateers on Jamaica remained insignificant until the early 1660s,

longer distances required to transport slaves from West Africa to the Greater Antilles made acquiring unfree labour a more troublesome and expensive proposition for planters on Jamaica.²⁸

This situation was further compounded by the fact that merchants in the City of London were, for the most part, unwilling to provide the credit necessary for prospective sugar planters on Jamaica to rapidly expand their business operations. Immediately after the seizure of Jamaica, it seemed probable that the tenuous English foothold in the Greater Antilles could not be sustained, and that the colony would either be recaptured or given back to Spain during diplomatic negotiations. This made most London merchants reluctant to finance the development of a plantation economy in a colony which seemed more like a temporary military garrison than a reliable source of long-term profits. A report signed by Martin Noell and Thomas Povey in June 1656 which stated how 'Jamaica looks only like a garrison, and rather as an Army than a colony', reflects the frustrations of some merchants about this state of affairs.²⁹ It was not until the 1680s when the inhabitants of Jamaica had turned their attention firmly towards the cultivation of cash crops, had received an injection of expertise from Surinamese sugar planters, and had begun to reinvest the capital generated locally through piracy, trade, and plantation production into the construction of sugar mills and the purchase of large numbers of enslaved Africans, that the sugar industry became the dominant form of economic activity on the island.³⁰

Another outlet for the capital generated from Barbados sugar was the joint stock of overseas trading companies. As we saw in Chapters Two and Four, the profits of the sugar boom played a major role in catapulting a cluster of merchants to the top of the London merchant community in the 1650s and early 1660s. Part of my evidence for this development is how merchant investors in Barbados diversified their business portfolios in the 1650s and 1660s by purchasing shares in the joint stock of overseas trading

see: Carla Pestana, 'Early English Jamaica without Pirates,' *The William and Mary Quarterly*, Vol. 71, No. 3 (2014), pp. 321-360.

²⁸ Eltis, *The Rise of African Slavery*, pp. 205-207.

²⁹ Zahedieh, 'Trade, Plunder and Economic Development', 210-213. Noell and Povey's observation is quoted in Swingen, *Competing Visions of Empire*, p. 51.

³⁰ Zahedieh, 'Trade, Plunder and Economic Development', 213-222. For the argument that English sugar planters from Surinam, who departed the colony after its cession to the Dutch under the terms of the Treaty of Breda in 1667, played an integral role in the development of the Jamaican sugar industry, see Roberts, 'Surrendering Surinam', pp. 248-254.

companies such as the East India Company, Levant Company, and Royal Adventurers Trading into Africa. The size of their investments along with their prodigious reputations in London meant that some prominent financiers of the sugar boom even served on the directorate of these companies.³¹

The East India Company deserves detailed attention, because in 1657, at around the same time London merchants began pulling their investments out of Barbados, the company saw a rapid influx of merchants with investments in the sugar boom into its directorate. This had ramifications for the policies the company developed in subsequent years. The East India Company secured a new charter in October 1657: a subscription of £500 to the new joint stock was required secure a vote in the election for the directorate, while to be eligible to serve on the Court of Committees itself a minimum investment of £1000 was compulsory.³² Due to the wealth they were generating from sugar and slavery, merchants with investments in Barbados were poised to subscribe heavily to the EIC's new joint stock. Out of 26 merchants elected to the executive board of the reconstituted East India Company, eight had identifiable links to Barbados, and were some of the leading investors in the sugar boom of the 1640s: Maurice Thomson, Thomas Andrewes, James Drax, Andrew Riccard, Martin Noell, William Williams, William Vincent, and John Wood. Within this group were the new governor of the company (Thomson), and his deputy (Andrewes). At least four other directors also had experience trading to North America and the Caribbean: William Thomson, Samuel Moyer, William Ryder, and Richard Ford.³³

The fact that several traders whom Brenner would describe as 'new merchants' served on the directorate of the East India Company in the 1650s, most notably Maurice Thomson, undermines Brenner's thesis that these merchants subscribed to an ideology of free trade. Men like Thomson were far more pragmatic than Brenner allows, sometimes organising interloping voyages in contravention of corporate

³¹ See Chapter Two of this dissertation.

³² *CCMEIC*, Vol. 5, pp. 173-175.

³³ *CCMEIC*, Vol. 5, pp. 197-199. As has already been mentioned, it is important to highlight that these merchants also had a variety of trading interests beyond Barbados. Some of the men listed above, including Andrew Riccard, William Williams, and William Vincent, all had ties to the East India Company dating back to the 1630s, and it should not come as a surprise therefore that they had risen to sit on the Court of Committees by the late 1650s. But I remain convinced that profits from Barbados sugar played a hitherto unrecognised and important role in precipitating the rapid ascendancy of these merchants into the upper echelons of London's merchant community, and that there was a distinctive injection of Barbadian expertise into the East India Company after 1657.

monopolies, and at other times working within trading companies when shielding themselves from outside competition was preferable.³⁴ Several merchants with financial ties to Barbados also invested in the new joint-stock, but were not elected to the company's directorate: Thomas Bell, William Drax, Michael Davison, Thomas Kendall, James Leaver, Peter Lear, John Paige, and William Watts (only the latter of whom subscribed less than £1000).³⁵ The injection of Barbadian expertise and capital into the directorate of the EIC was unprecedented, and caused an immediate shift in the company's policy, as the EIC began to take a greater interest in Atlantic trade. On the 18 December 1657, one day after the elections to the new Court of Committees had finished, Governor Maurice Thomson confirmed that the EIC had leased the Guinea Company's monopoly over West African commerce.³⁶ The EIC retained control over this patent until 1668, and in the interim had begun to integrate the gold and ivory trade at Fort Cormantine on the Gold Coast with their existing Asian commerce.³⁷ Due to his expertise in the process of colonial development, James Drax was conspicuous in meetings related to the planting of St. Helena, an island in the South Atlantic which in the 1680s the EIC would try to develop as a plantation economy, explicitly using Barbados as a model.³⁸

Merchant financiers of the Barbados sugar boom were also depositing the profits from their overseas investments with goldsmith-bankers in the City of London. These bankers provided a variety of financial services for their clients: they offered current accounts for day-to-day expenses, accepted capital deposits upon which they paid interest, discounted bills of exchange, issued promissory notes, offered loans to private individuals and the English government, and exchanged foreign currencies.³⁹ The survival of the customer account ledgers of Edward Backwell, the leading goldsmith-banker in Restoration London, allows us to investigate the extent to which merchants with connections to the Caribbean were making

³⁴ For the 'new merchant' ideology, see Brenner, *Merchants and Revolution*, pp. 169-161, 168-181.

³⁵ Anon., *A List of the names of all the adventurers in the new general stock to East-India, who have taken the last oath agreed on by the generality, December the 8, 1657* (London, 1657).

³⁶ *CCMEIC*, Vol. 5., p. 199. For a recent treatment of the merger between the EIC and Guinea Company, see Svalastog, 'Mastering the Worst of Trades', pp. 137-147. Svalastog does not emphasise the importance of Barbadian merchants in causing the EIC to turn towards Atlantic commerce.

³⁷ Margaret Makepeace, 'English Traders on the Guinea Coast, 1657-1668: An Analysis of the East India Company Archive', *History in Africa*, Vol. 16 (1989), pp. 237-284; Bennett, 'The East India Company, Transnational Interactions, and the Formation of Forced Labour Regimes', pp. 32-39.

³⁸ E.g. BL, IOR E/3/90, f. 178, London to St. Helena, 5 April 1684; Bennett, 'The East India Company, Transnational Interactions, and the Formation of Forced Labour Regimes', pp. 29-30, 71-72, ch. 3.

³⁹ Kerridge, *Trade and Banking in Early Modern England*, pp. 76-77; Melton, *Sir Robert Clayton*, pp. 18-20.

use of the financial services offered by goldsmith-bankers.⁴⁰ An analysis of Backwell's client base reveals how 23 of the London merchants who had invested in the Barbadian sugar economy during the 1640s were depositing their capital with Backwell in the 1660s: Thomas Andrewes, Richard Batson, Thomas Batson, Thomas Bell, William Bird, Edward Bushell, Thomas Bushell, Sir John Colliton [Colleton], Michael Davieson [Davison], Sir Richard Ford, Thomas Kendall, Sir Peter Leare, Isaac Legay, Thomas Middleton, Sir Martin Noell, James Noell, William Pennoyer, Thomas Povey, Sir Andrew Riccard, Giles Silvester, Maurice Thompson [Thomson], William Williams, and John Wood.⁴¹ I have identified 21 others that appear in Backwell's list of clients who also had business ties with the Caribbean sugar economy as either merchants or planters.⁴² Even the Royal African Company, East India Company, Muscovy Company, and the short-lived Canary Company made use of the financial services offered by Backwell.⁴³

After the Stop of the Exchequer in 1672 private goldsmith-bankers such as Edward Backwell no longer lent large sums of money to the Crown due to fears they would not be repaid.⁴⁴ But the English government was still in desperate need of loans, and so in 1694 a joint-stock of £1.2 million was raised to form the Bank of England, a key institution in the 'financial revolution' of the late seventeenth century.⁴⁵ Historians have observed how the Bank of England 'came to undertake everything the goldsmith-bankers did or had done', and that Backwell's bank was therefore 'a prototype of the Bank of England'.⁴⁶ Given

⁴⁰ On Backwell, see R. D. Richards, 'A Pre-Bank of England English Banker-Edward Backwell', Reprinted from *The Economic Journal* - Economic History, Supplement No. 3 (1928), pp. 335-355; G. E. Aylmer, 'Backwell, Edward (c. 1619-1683), goldsmith and banker', *ODNB* (23 September 2004), <https://www.oxforddnb.com/view/10.1093/ref:odnb/9780198614128.001.0001/odnb-9780198614128-e-986> (Accessed 8 November 2019).

⁴¹ Royal Bank of Scotland Archives, EB/1/1-4. See also the index of Backwell's customer account ledgers. This document provides a list of all of Backwell's clients between 1663 and 1672. See 'Customer account ledgers of Edward Backwell, 1663-72', available at <https://www.rbs.com/heritage/people/edward-backwell.html> (Accessed 09/04/2019).

⁴² They were: Benjamin Bathurst, John Bawdon [Bawden], Capt. Richard Beckford, Sir Tobias Bridges, Anthony Ashely Cooper, Sir Nicholas Crispe, Thomas Crispe, Seger de Hem, William Drax, William Freeman, Ferdinando Gorges, Charles Hilliard, James Leaver, Edward Littleton, Jacob Lucie, Luke Lucie, John Paige, Marmaduke Rawdon, William Watts, Sir Charles Wheeler, and Francis Lord Willoughby. Royal Bank of Scotland Archives, EB/1/1-4.

⁴³ Royal Bank of Scotland Archives, EB/1/1-4; Richards, 'A Pre-Bank of England English Banker-Edward Backwell', pp. 338-339; On the Canary Company, see Caroline A. J. Skeel, 'The Canary Company', *The English Historical Review*, Vol. 31, No. 124 (1916), pp. 529-544.

⁴⁴ Kerridge, *Trade and Banking in Early Modern England*, pp. 78-80.

⁴⁵ On the financial revolution, see P. G. M. Dickson, *The Financial Revolution in England: A Study in the Development of Public Credit, 1688-1756* (New York, 1967); Bruce G. Carruthers, *City of Capital: Politics and Markets in the English Financial Revolution* (Princeton, NJ, 1996); Carl Wennerlind, *Casualties of Credit: The English Financial Revolution, 1620-1720* (Cambridge, Mass., 2011).

⁴⁶ Quoted in Kerridge, *Trade and Banking in Early Modern England*, p. 77, 80.

how many merchant investors in the sugar boom banked with Edward Backwell, one might be tempted to use his customer account ledgers to try to draw some preliminary conclusions about whether the profits generated from overseas commerce, empire, and slavery played any role in precipitating the ‘financial revolution’.

But, in my opinion, this would be a mistake. London merchants and American planters formed just a small section of Backwell’s client base. Backwell held deposits from 1,372 clients in 1664-5.⁴⁷

Independently wealthy people at all levels of London society took advantage of the financial services offered by Backwell, including other goldsmiths, holders of government office, farmers of various customs and excises, members of the gentry (e.g. Prince Rupert and the Earl of Clarendon), leading ecclesiastical figures (e.g. the Bishop of Durham), and the Queen of England Catherine of Braganza.

Various parts of the English government in Westminster, including the Exchequer office and the Council of Trade, also held customer accounts with Backwell and borrowed money from him.⁴⁸ Considering how 44 men with business connections to the English Caribbean were clients of Edward Backwell, it is clear that *some* capital generated by sugar and slavery must have passed through his hands. We can therefore conclude that goldsmith-bankers were one of the locations where merchant investors in the Barbados sugar boom deposited capital. But much more detailed research in the account books of goldsmith-bankers, scriveners, and banking institutions in the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries would be necessary before broader conclusions could be made about whether the profits generated by the sugar boom had any bearing on the ‘financial revolution’.

The second section of this chapter will trace how the role of Barbados within the structure of England’s empire changed following the sugar boom.

⁴⁷ Braddick, *The Nerves of State*, p. 39.

⁴⁸ Royal Bank of Scotland Archives, EB/1/1-4; Richards, ‘A Pre-Bank of England English Banker-Edward Backwell’, pp. 338-339; Aylmer, ‘Edward Backwell’, *ODNB*.

2. The Role of Barbados in the Restoration Empire and the Rise of the Local Barbadian Merchant Community, c. 1650-1672

Using a rigid mercantilist framework for understanding the structure of early modern empires, many scholars of imperial history have argued that the Caribbean colonies acted as captive markets for manufactured goods exported from the metropole, with slave-grown sugar and other tropical commodities sent in the other direction.⁴⁹ However, this does not allow for variations in local conditions between colonies and the transnational dimensions of early modern empires. As I argued in Chapter Two, during the 1640s the tumult of domestic civil war and the commercial opportunities presented by the decline in the Brazilian sugar industry encouraged English merchants to invest their capital in land and enslaved Africans on Barbados. In this decade, therefore, the primary function of Barbados was as a site for capital investment for English merchants. This provided the funding needed to expedite the emergence of a sugar industry in the colony. These conditions were unique to the 1640s, however, and by the close of the decade Barbados' importance as an outlet for merchant capital had ended.

In a trend which began in the immediate wake of the sugar boom around the year 1650, and became even more noticeable after the Restoration, Barbados' role within the imperial structure of England's empire changed. The main function of Barbados was as a site of plantation production and as a regional centre of trade. But, as we will see below, the island also took on some more specialised roles during the 1660s, which were linked to the expansion in size and importance of the colony's own merchant community. For a brief time, Barbados functioned as a commercial entrepot for the transatlantic slave trade to Spanish America, and even provided the energy and capital needed to initiate the expansion of the empire in the Greater Caribbean.

The significance of Barbados as a pre-eminent site of plantation production within the English empire has been given considerable attention by historians. Until the mid-1680s, the tonnage of sugar from

⁴⁹ E.g. George Louis Beer, *The Old Colonial System, 1660-1754, Part I: The Establishment of the System, 1660-1688* (New York, 1912); Harper, *The English Navigation Laws*, pp. 240-245.

Barbados imported into England per annum was more than that of all the other colonies in the English Caribbean combined. In 1669, for instance, 9,525 tons of Barbados sugar was imported, far outstripping the 500 tons from Jamaica and the 1,679 tons from the Leeward Islands.⁵⁰ But much less consideration has been given to the role of Barbados as a centre of trade in the Caribbean. This is somewhat understandable, as we do not have reliable data for imports and exports on Barbados before the 1680s. We will therefore investigate this topic from a different angle, principally by exploring the expansion of the local Barbadian merchant community after 1650, and how this helped Barbados to become a centre of trade during the 1660s. We will begin by analysing two changes which occurred on Barbados at mid-century and led to the growth of the island's merchant population. First, the prolific nature of intercolonial and transnational trade on Barbados, which was spurred on in the 1650s by the consumer demand created by the sugar boom. This helped to create a commercial culture on Barbados which enshrined the right of the island's inhabitants to freedom of trade, and thus encouraged merchants of varied nationalities to relocate to the colony. Second, the rise of the commission system and the withdrawal of merchant capital around the year 1660 led the factors who represented English merchants on Barbados to increasingly trade on their own accounts and become merchants themselves, thus forming the core of the local Barbadian merchant community.

Sugar cane is an incredibly destructive crop for the environment. As more and more wooded land and provision grounds were set aside for sugar cultivation over the course of the 1640s and 1650s, planters on Barbados struggled to meet their subsistence needs. The inhabitants of the island eventually became dependent on imports of food, livestock, and lumber. This necessitated Barbadian merchants and planters to develop a mutable and pragmatic approach to trade and their place within the empire. As we saw in Chapter Three, the inhabitants of Barbados sometimes embraced their position within the mercantilist system of empire espoused by London merchants, and were keen to secure credit, indentured servants, enslaved Africans, and provisions from merchants in the metropole. But due to their incessant demand for the raw materials needed to keep their sugar mills turning, Barbadians were also more than willing to

⁵⁰ Dunn, *Sugar and Slaves*, p. 203; David Eltis, 'New Estimates of Exports from Barbados and Jamaica, 1665-1701', *The William and Mary Quarterly*, Vol. 52, No. 4 (1995), pp. 631-648; David Eltis, 'The Total Product of Barbados, 1664-1701', *Journal of Economic History*, Vol. 55, No. 2 (1995), pp. 321-338.

obtain provisions through contraband forms of intercolonial and transnational commerce. In his *True and Exact History of Barbados*, Richard Ligon described how colonists were supplied with foodstuffs from a wide variety of locations, demonstrating how the island had become a dynamic consumer market with connections across the Atlantic world by the late 1640s. Besides commodities brought from England, the inhabitants of Barbados enjoyed butter from Holland; wine from France, Spain, Madeira, and the Azores; beef from Virginia, New England, Holland, and Russia; fish from New England; wax from Africa; clothing from Holland; and draught animals from Holland, Virginia, New England, Cape Verde, Curacao, and the Azores.⁵¹

Intercolonial trade with merchants and planters in New England, Virginia, Carolina, and Surinam was an important means through which Barbadians obtained the provisions and raw materials needed to sustain the sugar industry. The Caribbean plantation system was bound together with other colonies in the Atlantic world by a web of commercial linkages and family ties. This interconnectedness was vital to the success of nascent plantation economies in the Lesser Antilles during the seventeenth century. Indeed, Wendy Warren has persuasively argued that merchants, fishermen, and farmers in New England provisioned the sugar colonies with cereals and fish, providing the basic nutrition necessary for enslaved Africans to conduct plantation work in the Caribbean.⁵² Her interpretation is supported by a 1661 report to the Council of Foreign Plantations, in which one ship captain remarked how the New England colonies were ‘the key to the Indies, without which Jamaica, Barbadoes and ye Charriby Islands are not able to subsist’.⁵³

Barbados was also sufficiently close to ‘satellite colonies’ which could be exploited for raw materials.

Barbadian planters relied on the mainland colony of Surinam and the thinly settled islands of St. Lucia, Tobago, Dominica, and St. Vincent for their stocks of wood, for example. Stripping the natural assets of

⁵¹ Ligon, *True and Exact History*, p. 77, 80, 85-86, 111; Handler, ‘Father Antoine Biet’s Visit’, p. 62. On the Atlantic wine trade, see David Hancock, *Oceans of Wine*.

⁵² Warren, *New England Bound*, 53-58. See also Bernard Bailyn, *The New England Merchants in the Seventeenth Century* (Cambridge, Mass., 1955), pp. 84-85.

⁵³ Quoted in Larry Gragg, ‘Puritans in Paradise: The New England Migration to Barbados, 1640-1660’, *The Journal of Caribbean History*, Vol. 21, No. 2, (1988), pp. 155-156.

nearby landmasses aided colonists on Barbados in undertaking the resource-intensive process of transitioning their economy to a sugar cane monoculture.⁵⁴ By the 1660s, Barbadian planters and merchants had also begun to trade in enslaved Indians procured by fellow Englishmen in New England, Carolina, and the Guianas, using their bodies to satisfy the voracious appetite of the plantation economy for unfree labor.⁵⁵

Transnational commerce also helped meet the consumer demand on Barbados created by the sugar boom. Collectively, a growing body of recent scholarship has highlighted the ‘entangled’ nature of early modern empires and has stressed how transnational cooperation contributed to the commercial success of the Atlantic economy.⁵⁶ Barbados in the mid-seventeenth century was no exception. The United Provinces dominated the Atlantic carrying trade in the middle decades of the seventeenth century. Consequently, Dutch traders who regularly plied the waters of the Caribbean sought to profit from the newfound consumer demand on Barbados, stopping off at the island for short periods of up to three months to sell their wares in exchange for tropical commodities. But, unlike English merchants, Dutch traders visiting the island did not usually conduct business using long-term financial arrangements based around extensions of long credit.⁵⁷

The passage of the first Navigation Act in October 1651 imposed restrictions on colonial commerce by banning foreign ships from trading with England’s overseas holdings.⁵⁸ But the inhabitants of Barbados were more than willing to contravene its prohibitions, and continued to meet local demand for provisions

⁵⁴ Justin Roberts and Ian Beamish, ‘Venturing Out: The Barbadian Diaspora and the Carolina Colony, 1650-1685’, in Michelle LeMaster and Bradford J. Wood, eds, *Creating and Contesting Carolina: Proprietary Era Histories* (Columbia, SC, 2013), pp. 49-72.

⁵⁵ For how Indian slave imports from New England were restricted after 1676 due to fears about slave rebellion on Barbados, see Linford D. Fisher, ‘“Dangerous Designs”: The 1676 Barbados Act to Prohibit New England Indian Slave Importation’, *The William and Mary Quarterly*, Vol. 71, No. 1 (2014), pp. 99-124; Warren, *New England Bound*, ch. 3. For Carolina, see Allan Galloway, *The Indian Slave Trade: The Rise of the English Empire in the American South, 1670–1717* (New Haven, CT, 2005), 299-300. For the Guianas, see Arena, ‘Indian Slaves from Guiana’.

⁵⁶ For entangled empires, see Eliga H. Gould, ‘Entangled Histories, Entangled Worlds: The English-Speaking Atlantic as a Spanish Periphery’, *The American Historical Review*, Vol. 112, No. 3 (2007), pp. 764-786; Jorge Cañizares-Esguerra, ed., *Entangled Empires: The Anglo-Iberian Atlantic, 1500-1830* (Pennsylvania, 2018). Recent scholarship has shown that in some cases there was peace and cooperation ‘beyond the line’. For examples, see Wim Klooster, ‘Anglo-Dutch Trade in the Seventeenth Century: An Atlantic Partnership?’, in Macinnes and Williamson, eds, *Shaping the Stuart World*, pp. 261-282; Koot, *Empire at the Periphery*.

⁵⁷ Koot, *Empire at the Periphery*, pp. 55-57; Klooster, *The Dutch Moment*, pp. 167-169.

⁵⁸ Farnell, ‘The Navigation Act of 1651’.

by trading with ships of any nationality which happened to pass the island.⁵⁹ Throughout the 1650s, between 10 and 30 Dutch vessels traded with the colony annually.⁶⁰ There were 14 Dutch merchant vessels riding in Carlisle Bay when Sir George Ayscue reached Barbados with the Commonwealth's fleet in October 1651. A further 11 Dutch vessels were captured while Ayscue's fleet was stationed at Barbados, which when combined with the seizures made when they first arrived, generated £100,000 of prize money.⁶¹

After the passage of the Navigation Act transnational trade with foreign merchants became a politically charged issue for the inhabitants of Barbados. Two decades of unfettered access to Dutch traders and their cheap merchandise had fostered the development of a commercial culture among colonists which enshrined their right to freedom of trade.⁶² Barbadian planters had published a declaration in February 1651, for example, which articulated how they would never deny foreign merchants 'the freedome of our Ports'.⁶³ They believed they had legal justification for their actions too, arguing that the articles of peace signed with the reduction of the colony in January 1652, which guaranteed their right to free trade, was their charter and therefore superseded the October 1650 embargo act and the October 1651 Navigation Act.⁶⁴

It was the pragmatic approach to commerce taken by Daniel Searle, the governor of Barbados between 1652 and 1660, which allowed transnational trade to continue to flourish on the island after the passage of the Navigation Act. In October 1652 he wrote to the Council of State to explain how 'the trade of this Iland Formerly...was most of all carried on by the Dutch', but that the 'the late Act of parliament for the

⁵⁹ Koot, *Empire at the Periphery*, pp. 57-63.

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 60.

⁶¹ TNA, CO 1/11, ff. 145-147; *CSPC AWI*, Vol. 1., pp. 362-364, 31 October 1651; Koot, *Empire at the Periphery*, pp. 59-60.

⁶² Christian J. Koot, 'A "Dangerous Principle" Free Trade Discourses in Barbados and the English Leeward Islands, 1650-1689', *Early American Studies*, Vol. 5, No. 1 (2007), pp. 132-163.

⁶³ Anon., *A Declaration Set forth by the Lord Lieutenant General Gentlemen of the Councill & assembly occasioned from the view of a printed paper* (The Hague, 1651).

⁶⁴ For the 1652 articles of surrender being perceived as the new charter of Barbados, see John Jennings, *Acts and Statutes of the Island of Barbados made and enacted since the reducement of the same unto the authority of the Commonwealth of England, unto the Authority of the Common-Wealth of England... Together with the Charter of the said island, etc.* (Barbados, 1654). For the belief that they superseded the 1650 embargo and the 1651 Navigation Act, see *Thurloe Papers*, Vol. 3., pp. 249-252, Edward Winslow to Secretary Thurloe, 16 March 1655. See also Bliss, *Revolution and Empire*, pp. 89-91.

Encrease of the navigation and trade of our nation...hath in a great measure take them off from it'. Only a few English merchant vessels had visited the island in recent months, leading to a scarcity of staple commodities. Probably out of necessity, Searle inquired whether 'all merchant ships bounde to this Iland of any nation maight be free from any stop or Imbargoe, if the State In their wisdom shall soe judge it fit'.⁶⁵ Searle's conviction that freedom of trade was a natural right probably owed something to the fact he began his career as a merchant based at the trading entrepot of St. Malo in France.⁶⁶

As the decade wore on, Governor Searle became even more flagrant in his disregard of the Navigation Act. He began to operate a policy of welcoming traders of other nations to the island, especially those from Holland and France.⁶⁷ Nicholas Florinon, captain of the *King David* of Amsterdam was put on trial in February 1655 to explain why he had been selling horses from Holland and Curacao at Barbados. Florinon protested that it was only with 'the Governor's leave' that he sold the horses, a claim which was later supported by Jacob Albreertz, the steersman of the vessel, who affirmed that 'Governour Searle bought one of the 15 horses they brought from Holland to Barbadas'.⁶⁸ One Bristol mariner named George Hellier, who was disgruntled with Searle's lenient attitude towards foreign traders, deposed in January 1654 that Searle had dismissed his protests by saying that even 'if a Turke had brought' in goods to Barbados he would still protect it. According to this informant, Searle was convinced that 'his Comission did extend soe farr as to trade with all those places as were in Amity with him', even though this conflicted with the instructions given by the English state.⁶⁹

The inhabitants of Barbados deemed transnational commerce important enough to warrant the development of sophisticated economic and legal arguments supporting their right to free trade with foreign merchants. Through this 'free trade discourse' colonists articulated their own vision of empire and commerce, rejecting the control metropolitan authorities were increasingly trying to exert over colonial

⁶⁵ TNA, CO 1/11, f. 188, Daniel Searle to the Council of State, 8 October 1652.

⁶⁶ TNA, HCA 13/62, 'Deposition of Mary Searle, the wife of Daniel Searle of St Malos in France merchant'.

⁶⁷ Searle apparently stated that if foreign merchants wanted to 'trade against the laws of England, at their peril and fortune be it'. *Thurloe Papers*, Vol. 3., pp. 249-252, Edward Winslow to Secretary Thurloe, 16 March 1655.

⁶⁸ TNA, CO 1/66, f. 47.

⁶⁹ Nott and Ralph, eds, *The Deposition Books of Bristol*, Vol. 2, pp. 135-136.

affairs through legislation such as the Navigation Acts.⁷⁰ Debates between Barbadian colonists and London merchants over the nature and extent of free trade reflected a clash of vested interests between these two interest groups over the structure of the empire and its economy. Who was to be the primary beneficiary from the profits of sugar and slavery, the English state and its merchant supporters, or the colonists who had themselves ploughed the soil of the Caribbean islands?

Legal pluralities and divergent interpretations of the law made metropolitan rulings prohibiting Anglo-Dutch trade in the colonial sphere almost impossible to enforce. When ordered by the commissioners for the Western Design to prosecute foreign merchants trading at Barbados, for instance, Governor Searle pointed to a common law trial heard in the colony's court as his legal justification for permitting the Dutch to trade at the island. During this trial, representatives of the English merchants had tried to use metropolitan commercial legislation, such as the October 1650 embargo and the 1651 Navigation Act, to dismantle the colonist's trade with Dutch merchants. But the jury, filled as it was with planters and merchants living on the island who were keen to continue trading with foreign nations, 'found for the strangers against parliament and state, grounding all upon the articles of Barbadoes'.⁷¹ The representatives of English merchants were understandably discouraged following this ruling. On the contrary, 'the Dutch were courted, and highly prized, and sent home in a triumphant manner, to invite them freely to the trade of Barbados'.⁷²

Expanding consumer demand due to the sugar boom, the prevalence of transnational trade on the island, and the development of a 'free trade discourse' among the inhabitants of Barbados, were all factors which encouraged merchants with various backgrounds to relocate to the colony in the late 1640s and 1650s. Merchants such as John Turner, John Parris, William Vassall, Nathaniel Maverick, and Samuel Winthrop were among those who departed New England to settle on Barbados, where they speculated in sugar

⁷⁰ Koot, 'Free Trade Discourses in Barbados and the English Leeward Islands'; Swingen, *Competing Visions of Empire*, passim; Pestana, *English Atlantic in an Age of Revolution*, p. 158, 170-173.

⁷¹ *Thurloe Papers*, Vol. 3., pp. 249-252, Edward Winslow to Secretary Thurloe, 16 March 1655. The 'articles of Barbadoes' were the articles of surrender agreed when the colony was reduced in January 1652.

⁷² *Ibid.*

production and acted as factors for their business partners in port towns such as Boston.⁷³ Moreover, after the fall of Dutch Brazil in 1654, Sephardic Jewish merchants with business interests in the sugar trade moved in substantial numbers from Brazil to Barbados, integrating the island into their diasporic trading networks.⁷⁴ The Sephardim had maintained business connections with Barbados since the onset of sugar production. Luke Lucie, a London merchant who came from a cosmopolitan family of Sephardic businessmen with mercantile ties across the Atlantic world, purchased a plantation on Barbados in 1645, for example. By 1658, Lucie had aggregated enough surrounding land to expand his plantation to 700 acres.⁷⁵

In the mid-1650s there was an influx of Sephardic merchants into Barbados to profit from the island's expanding sugar economy. The London-based rabbi Menasseh ben Israel facilitated the Sephardic emigration to Barbados by securing passes for them from Cromwell in 1655.⁷⁶ Two of the most well-documented Sephardic merchants living on Barbados were the brothers Simon and Benjamin de Caceres. The earliest mention of these merchants in the primary source record dates to 1653, when Governor Daniel Searle wrote a certificate confirming that Simon de Caceres enjoyed the same rights as other English freeholders on Barbados, because he owned a plantation and a storehouse in Bridgetown.⁷⁷ Yda Schreuder has presented evidence from the Amsterdam notarial archives to demonstrate how, by the early

⁷³ Gragg, 'Puritans in Paradise', pp. 156-158.

⁷⁴ Yda Schreuder, *Amsterdam's Sephardic Merchants and the Atlantic Sugar Trade in the Seventeenth Century* (London, 2019), pp. 138-155, 176-196; Yda Schreuder, 'A True Global Community: Sephardic Jews, the Sugar Trade, and Barbados in the Seventeenth Century', *Journal of the Barbados Museum and Historical Society*, Vol. 50 (2004), pp. 174-181; Yda Schreuder, 'Evidence from the Notarial Protocols in the Amsterdam Municipal Archives about Trade Relationships between Amsterdam and Barbados in the 17th Century', *Journal of the Barbados Museum and Historical Society*, Vol. 52 (2006), pp. 54-82; Martyn J. Bowden, 'The Three Centuries of Bridgetown: An Historical Geography', *Journal of the Barbados Museum and Historical Society*, Vol. 49 (2003), pp. 40-47. The order of the Barbados council in January 1655 that permitted the Sephardic refugees from Brazil to remain on the island can be found in, *Barbados Council Minutes*, p. 60. For more on trading diasporas, see Philip Curtin, *Cross-Cultural Trade in World History* (Cambridge, 1984).

⁷⁵ Campbell, *Some Early Barbadian History*, p. 54; Otremba, 'Inventing Ingenios', pp. 132-133. BDA, RB3/2, pp. 474-75.

⁷⁶ Klooster, *The Dutch Moment*, pp. 226-227; Schreuder, *Amsterdam's Sephardic Merchants*, pp. 164-172.

⁷⁷ TNA, CO 1/66, f. 12. Simon de Caceres regularly petitioned the Lord Protector, offering his advice on Caribbean affairs. In the aftermath of the Western Design he provided instructions about how best to fortify Jamaica, and also suggested that a new invasion force be dispatched to Chile to seize Spanish gold mines on the west coast of South America. In 1658 he submitted a document to Cromwell outlining his thoughts on the best way to enforce the Navigation Act on Barbados. See *Thurlow Papers*, Vol. 4., pp. 61-63, 'A note of what things are wanting in Jamaica by Simon de Casseres' and 'The humble proposition of Simon de Casseres', [n.d. c. 1655]; Bodelian Library, MS Rawl A. 60, f. 131, 'Proposals for the protection of British commerce, and excluding strangers from trading with Barbadoes'.

1660s, there was a community of Sephardic merchants resident in Bridgetown as denizens, who flouted the Navigation Acts by contracting with Dutch and English ship captains to export Barbadian sugar to refineries in London and the Low Countries.⁷⁸ By 1665, the trading activities of Sephardic merchants on Barbados had begun to raise the ire of English-born Barbadian merchants. They lodged formal complaints regarding how the 'Jews were numerous and engrossing the whole trade to the great discouragement of the English merchants, their dealings being principally with those of their own tribe in Holland'.⁷⁹

Changes in the structure of imperial commerce after 1660 also played an important role in the expansion of the Barbadian merchant community. From the 1630s to the 1660s English merchants dispatched trusted representatives (often called factors) to administer their business affairs on Barbados. A factor had numerous responsibilities which, broadly conceived, encompassed receiving trading vessels sent by English merchants, keeping an accurate account of debits and credits, maintaining a regular correspondence with their employer, collecting outstanding debts from planters, and sometimes even presiding over the purchase or sale of plantations on behalf of merchant syndicates. From their position working in Barbadian port towns such as Bridgetown and Speightstown, the factors of English merchants who had invested in the sugar boom were afforded the opportunity to conduct private trade and accumulate property, and many subsequently became prosperous members of colonial society. When the absentee merchant investors in the sugar boom began to withdraw their investments from Barbadian plantations there was more time available for their factors on the island to trade on their own accounts. The rise of the commission system of merchandising in the 1660s and 1670s, which saw planters coordinate the delivery of sugar to London markets themselves, further reduced the workload of factors on Barbados. Consequently, private trading ventures started to become the major form of business activity they conducted. This could potentially be very lucrative, because by becoming an entrepreneur factors

⁷⁸ Schreuder, *Amsterdam's Sephardic Merchants*, pp. 150-154. The members of Bridgetown's Sephardic merchant community in the early 1660s included: Abraham de Mercado, Isaac Aboab de Fonseca, Simon and Benjamin de Caceres, Manuel and Jeronimo Rodrigues, Moyses Aron, Isaack Levy Resios, Moyses Ramias, Elyas Burgos, David da Costa, and Moses Hamesgago. For more on the Jewish community of seventeenth-century Barbados, see Eustace M. Shilstone, *Jewish Monumental Inscriptions in Barbados* (London, 1956).

⁷⁹ Quoted in Schreuder, *Amsterdam's Sephardic Merchants*, p. 180.

were poised to generate profits which far exceeded what they had formerly received by doing business on someone else's behalf. The factors of the English merchants who had financed the sugar boom formed the nucleus of the Barbadian merchant community, which began to expand in size and importance in the 1660s.⁸⁰

The argument that the factors of English merchants adapted their business practices and turned into Barbadian merchants in the 1660s can be evidenced by the careers of Edward Bradbourne and John Bushell. Edward Bradbourne first arrived on Barbados in 1658 as a 'servant and Factor to Mr Noell'. He was a replacement for William Povey, who had previously served as Martin Noell and Thomas Povey's factor on the island until the breakdown in communication between the two Povey brothers in 1657-8.⁸¹ Edward Bradbourne continued to reside on Barbados after the death of Martin Noell in 1665, and by the second half of the 1660s was increasingly being described as a 'Barbados merchant' of significant standing in the colony, offering loans to fellow merchants and planters. In 1666, for instance, the Barbadian merchant Alexander Comingham confessed that he was indebted to 'Edward Bradbourne Bdos merch't' the enormous sum of 800,000 lb. of sugar and £250 sterling. In order to satisfy his creditor, Comingham was forced to mortgage his 560-acre sugar plantation, complete with 90 enslaved Africans.⁸² With legal decisions such as these ruling in his favour, Bradbourne soon became a landowner in the colony on top of his trading activities. He owned the Hilcots plantation through an attorney, for example, which in 1668 he supplied with '48 pipes of Madera wine, Ellephants Teeth, Gould dust, negroes, and other Merchandises of a very great value'. The fact Bradbourne was dealing in these commodities suggest that his trading networks reached out from Barbados to West Africa and the Atlantic islands.⁸³

⁸⁰ Richard Pares observed this process occurring at English and French colonies in the Caribbean: 'by 1670 or thereabouts, the factors in the colonies were turning into merchants'. Pares, *Merchants and Planters*, p. 31. But, unlike in my analysis, Pares did not identify the reasons why this transformation occurred on Barbados.

⁸¹ For letters dispatched by Thomas Povey mentioning how Edward Bradbourne was Martin Noell's Barbadian factor, see BL, Add. Ms. 11411, ff. 51-57, 78-79, 82. In his capacity as a factor for the Noell merchant syndicate Bradbourne facilitated the sale of the 2000-acre Noellia plantation at the Surinam colony in 1659. BDA, RB3/5, pp. 873-879.

⁸² BDA, RB 3/2, pp. 948-50. For another example where Edward Bradbourne is described as a 'Barbados merchant', see BDA, RB 3/6, pp. 549-51.

⁸³ TNA, CO 1/23, f. 121, 'The humble peticon of Edward Bradbourne of Barbados Merchant'.

Another example is John Bushell, the brother of the London-based sugar trader Edward Bushell, who was dispatched to Barbados to manage the family's sugar trading business there as a factor after the death of their kinsman Thomas in the early 1660s.⁸⁴ If we cast our minds back to Chapter Two, it will be remembered that John Bushell had previously served as Edward's factor in Lisbon, trading from there to Brazil and Angola. Operating in partnership with Francis Bond, John Bushell became one of Bridgetown's leading merchants over the course of the 1660s and 1670s.⁸⁵ Surviving deed records at the Barbados Department of Archives reveal how, between 1668 and 1670, Bushell and Bond purchased real estate in Bridgetown, including a house and storehouse in the desirable Cheapside neighbourhood, along also with a contingent of 79 enslaved Africans.⁸⁶ As well as accumulating Barbadian property, John Bushell and Francis Bond were also deeply involved in regional trade within the Caribbean. They were part-owners and freighters of the *William & Nicholas*, for instance, which in February 1670 was undertaking a trading mission in the Greater Caribbean for logwood when the ship became leaky and was forced to put in at Anguilla for repairs.⁸⁷ Bushell and Bond even published a pamphlet in 1668 detailing the devastating impact of a fire in the commercial district of Bridgetown, which came two years after a similar fire had levelled London.⁸⁸

It is possible to gauge the degree of expansion of the Barbadian merchant community between 1640 and 1670 by abstracting names of merchants from the deed records at the Barbados Department of Archives. When deeds of sale were drawn up by notaries in early Barbados, the names of the parties involved were almost always followed by a short description of their place of residence and profession. In the era of the sugar boom the descriptors most commonly used were 'Barbados planter', 'Barbados gent', 'London

⁸⁴ Thomas Bushell, who had served as Edward Bushell's factor on Barbados since at least the mid-1650s, began to be described as a 'Barbadoes merchant' in the Barbados deed records around the year 1661, shortly before his death. BDA, RB3/5, pp. 252-253. For Thomas Bushell's 1659 will, see *Complete Book of Emigrants*, p. 450.

⁸⁵ Francis Bond was a member of the Barbados council in the 1680s. He was said to be 'as good as Edward Bushell or Maurice Thompson', and was also reported to be a preacher. See *CSPC AWI*, Vol. 12., p. 643, 'Addenda: May 1683'. For a brief time, from 1696-1697, Francis Bond served as the acting governor of Barbados, further demonstrating his prominence on the island.

⁸⁶ BDA, RB3/6, pp. 257-260; BDA, RB3/8, pp. 194-203.

⁸⁷ The other owners of the vessel were John Knight, William Bate, and John Johnson. TNA, CO 1/28, f. 121.

⁸⁸ John Bushell and Francis Bond, *Narrative of the late dreadful fire which happened at Bridge-Town in the Barbadoes, April 18 1668. As the same was communicated in two Letters from Mr John Bushel, and Mr Francis Bond, two Eminent Merchants there, to Mr Edward Bushel Citizen and Merchant of London. Containing the beginning, progress, and event of that dreadful fire; with the estimation of the loss accrewing thereby, as it was delivered to his Majesty by several Eminent Merchants concerned in that Loss* (London, 1668). See also TNA, CO 1/22, f. 120 & f. 126.

merchant', and 'Barbados merchant'. It is the latter of these descriptors we are interested in here. By systematically going through the Barbados deeds records and tallying up the names of those described as 'Barbados merchants', it is possible to come to a better understanding of how the size of the local merchant community on Barbados changed over time.

There are some obvious problems with this approach. For instance, this is just a proxy-based estimate of the size of the Barbadian merchant community, and as such is imprecise. It is possible that not every Barbadian merchant purchased property during their time in residence on the island, or that the records detailing their property transactions did not survive. There is better survival of source material for the 1650s and 1660s when compared to the 1640s, for example. But in the absence of more reliable census records, these are the best estimates we can achieve. It is also important to note that a few individuals, such as Thomas Kendall and Isaac Legay, appear as both 'London merchants' and 'Barbados merchants' in the deed records. This is because the colonial population of the English Atlantic world was itinerant. Merchants would sometimes travel out with their vessels to oversee the sale of their goods, spend some time in the American colonies, before returning to England in the future. If a merchant purchased property while resident on Barbados they would be described in the deed books as a 'Barbados merchant'. On the other hand, if they were absentee proprietors working through attorneys on Barbados, they would be referred to as 'London merchants' in the source material.

These caveats aside, the evidence is quite revealing. A list of the names of every Barbados merchant recorded as purchasing property on the island between 1640 and 1670, divided by decade, has been collated and is available in the Appendix to this dissertation (see Appendix 4). During the 1640s, when the transition to sugar cultivation was just getting underway, there were 70 people described as 'Barbados merchants' living on the island. By the 1650s, when the sugar boom was in full swing, the Barbadian merchant community had seen a two-and-a-half-fold increase to 174 persons. The size of the merchant population remained relatively stable into the next decade, reaching 187 persons during the 1660s. To put this into context, a 1703 census of New York lists 110 persons as 'merchants', while a Philadelphia census

of 1756 identifies 230.⁸⁹ In other words, the merchant population of Barbados in the decades following the start of the 1640s sugar boom either exceeded, or was at the very least comparable to, some of the most prominent port towns in North America in the first half of the eighteenth century. In terms of gender breakdown, all of the Barbadian merchants in the era of the sugar boom were men. Based on surname conventions, it also appears that most of the Barbados merchants between 1640 and 1670 were of English heritage, with a smattering of Dutchmen and Sephardic Jews too. Though we must be careful not to read too much into this, because it is possible that the names recorded in the deed books were Anglicised by notaries.

The expansion of the Barbadian merchant community during the 1650s helped Barbados to become a centre of trade in the Caribbean by the 1660s. A scarcity of import and export data means we cannot quantify the merchant traffic to Barbados in the era of the sugar boom with precision. But from qualitative descriptions of Barbadian trade it is clear that, as an important node in the Atlantic economic system, the colony attracted hundreds of merchant vessels to visit its shores each year. The first historian of the British Empire, John Oldmixon, recounted in 1707 how ‘the Inhabitants [of Barbados] driving a considerable Trade with all Parts of the World, grew rich’. He marvelled how ‘many Merchants have in a little Time acquired Lands, Honours, and Offices, by the Credit and Profit of this once thriving Trade, which in the Reign of King Charles II, used to employ 400 Sail of Ships, of 150 Tuns each, one with another, in all 60000 Tuns’.⁹⁰ Adam Smith concurred. Writing in 1776, Smith maintained that a century prior ‘the island of Barbados, in short, was the only British colony of any consequence of which the condition at that time bore any resemblance to what it is at present’.⁹¹ Samuel Copen’s print of

⁸⁹ Cathy Matson, *Merchants & Empire: Trading in Colonial New York* (Baltimore, MD, 1998), p. 128; Thomas M. Doerflinger, *A Vigorous Spirit of Enterprise: Merchants and Economic Development in Revolutionary Philadelphia* (Chapel Hill, NC, 1986), p. 17. Unfortunately, it has not been possible to find a comparison at another English colony for the 1650s and 1660s. Bailyn’s *New England Merchants in the Seventeenth Century*, for instance, does not provide any estimates for the merchant population of port towns in the region, such as Boston or Providence.

⁹⁰ Oldmixon, *The British Empire in America*, Vol. 2, pp. 11, 166-167.

⁹¹ Quoted in Trevor Burnard, ‘Making a Whig Empire Work: Transatlantic Politics and the Imperial Economy in Britain and British America’, *The William and Mary Quarterly*, Vol. 69, No. 1 (2012), p. 51.

Bridgetown in 1694 shows 44 merchant vessels riding in Carlisle Bay, providing visual evidence of the extent of Barbadian commerce in the seventeenth century.⁹²

Although the fact that Barbados was able to attract large numbers of merchant vessels to visit its shores was lauded by contemporaries and early historians alike as a marker of colonial success, we know today that the consequences of this heavy merchant traffic were not all positive. Infectious disease follows trade routes.⁹³ Consequently, centres of trade such as Bridgetown were point sources for the transmission of epidemic disease. The timing of the first recorded epidemic of yellow fever on Barbados is telling. It occurred in the immediate wake of the sugar boom, in 1647, and was facilitated by the expansion of merchant traffic between West Africa and Barbados, and the growth of the sugar industry (the *Aedes aegypti* mosquito can survive on both sucrose and human blood).⁹⁴

As well as functioning as a site of plantation production and a centre of trade, Barbados also took on some more specialised roles during the 1660s. Indeed, the importance of Barbados to the English empire in the decades immediately following the sugar boom, and especially the fact that Barbadian merchants and planters financed new colonial offshoots, suggests that the Restoration empire had two core regions: London and Barbados.

For example, for a brief time Barbados served as a commercial entrepot in the transatlantic slave trade to Spanish America. Rather than labouring on sugar plantations, enslaved Africans in Mexico, Peru, and New Granada worked either in urban centres or toiling to extract precious metals in the mines of Zacatecas and Potosí.⁹⁵ While enslaved Africans tended to be sold to planters in the Caribbean on credit, the inhabitants of Spanish America were, by contrast, willing to purchase African captives from foreign

⁹² Bridenbaugh, *No Peace Beyond the Line*, p. 333.

⁹³ Alfred W. Crosby, *Ecological Imperialism: The Biological Expansion of Europe, 900-1900* (Cambridge, 1986), ch. 9.

⁹⁴ Phillip D. Curtin, 'Disease Exchange Across the Tropical Atlantic', *History and Philosophy of the Life Sciences*, Vol. 15, No. 3 (1993), pp. 347-348. On epidemiology and the Caribbean more broadly, see J. R. McNeill, *Mosquito Empires: Ecology and War in the Greater Caribbean, 1620-1914* (Cambridge, 2012).

⁹⁵ For a recent reassessment of the slave trade to Spanish America, see Alex Borucki, David Eltis, and David Wheat, 'Atlantic History and the Slave Trade to Spanish America', *The American Historical Review*, Vol. 120, No. 2, (2015), pp. 433-461.

merchants for inflated prices and in exchange for specie offered up front. This was an alluring prospect for the bullion-starved mercantilist empires of Europe, who jumped at the chance to provision Spanish colonists with enslaved Africans.

In the historiography of the seventeenth-century Atlantic world Jamaica and the Dutch island of Curacao have been identified as the main colonies involved in the entrepot trade to Spanish America. It is usually forgotten, however, that it was merchants and *asiento* agents on Barbados, not Jamaica, who pioneered the lucrative re-export trade between the English empire and Spanish America during the 1660s. This was more than a decade before the first merchant vessels were permitted by the Spanish crown to travel to Jamaica and engage in the slave trade in 1677.⁹⁶ In early March 1662 two Spanish merchants ventured to Barbados to inquire about securing themselves a supply of enslaved Africans for Peru. The speaker of the Barbados Assembly Thomas Modyford was enthusiastic about their proposal. As a result, the Spaniards returned in April 1662 and purchased 400 enslaved Africans in exchange for approximately 125 to 140 pieces of eight per head.⁹⁷ It is instructive that the Spaniards chose to travel to Barbados to make their proposal, and not Jamaica. The fact these early Anglo-Spanish slave trading encounters took place on Barbados highlights how the island was a regional centre of trade during the 1660s, and as such attracted new commercial opportunities.

In July 1662, the *asiento* contract to supply enslaved Africans to markets in Spanish America was granted to a Genoese merchant firm directed by Domenico Grillo and Ambrosio Lomellino.⁹⁸ Grillo and Lomellino did not have direct experience trading on the West African coast themselves, and so they sub-contracted with external suppliers to ensure that they disembarked the necessary quota of enslaved Africans in Spanish America.⁹⁹ One of these sub-contractors was the English corporation the Royal

⁹⁶ On Jamaica's role in entrepot slave trade to Spanish America, see Curtis Nettels, 'England and the Spanish-American Trade, 1680-1715', *Journal of Modern History*, Vol. 3, No. 1 (1931), pp. 1-32; Zahedieh, 'The Merchants of Port Royal'. For Curacao, see Klooster, *The Dutch Moment*, pp. 181-183.

⁹⁷ George Frederick Zook, *The Company of Royal Adventurers Trading into Africa* (Lancaster, PA, 1919), p. 87.

⁹⁸ In the period when Grillo and Lomellino held the *asiento* contract, between 1663 and 1674, it is estimated that more than 18,000 African captives were disembarked in Spanish American ports. Borucki, Eltis, and Wheat, 'Atlantic History and the Slave Trade to Spanish America', p. 449 fn. 49

⁹⁹ Svalastog, 'Mastering the Worst of Trades', p. 187.

Adventurers Trading into Africa, which agreed to dispatch 3,500 captives to Cartagena, Portobello, and Veracruz for seven years. The financier of the Barbados sugar boom Martin Noell helped to engineer this deal by personally arranging for 600-1000 enslaved Africans, already on Barbados, to be delivered to Genoese *asiento* agents for transportation to Veracruz on the *St. Jean Baptist*. Once an agreement had been finalised, Charles II gave this lucrative trade legal sanction by lifting the Navigation Acts.¹⁰⁰ Despite some initial promise, the Royal Adventurers were not particularly successful in transforming Barbados into a hub of Anglo-Spanish trade. This was partly because of the great distances between Barbados and the Spanish Main when compared to Jamaica's location in the Greater Antilles, but was more immediately due to disruption to the supply of enslaved Africans to English colonies caused by the Second Anglo-Dutch War (1665-1667). Approximately 15 percent of the enslaved Africans imported into Barbados between 1661 and 1667 were bought by *asiento* agents for re-export to Spanish America, highlighting how Barbados functioned as a commercial entrepot in the middle decades of the 1660s.¹⁰¹

During the 1650s and 1660s Barbadian merchants and planters were deeply involved in co-ordinating and financing the settlement of new colonial offshoots in Surinam, St. Lucia, and Carolina. This suggests that, in the 20 years between 1650 and 1670, Barbados also acted as a nursery for new colonial ventures to expand the English empire in the Greater Caribbean. Indeed, I would agree with Ian Beamish and Justin Roberts that the expansionary impulse provided by Barbadian merchants and planters was even more powerful and extensive than the imperial ambitions of the English state in the Caribbean during the 1660s. This was because of the massive wealth being created on Barbados in the era of the sugar boom, which Barbadian planters and merchants could only find an outlet for elsewhere to the limited resources on their island.¹⁰²

There were a number of expansion projects initiated by the inhabitants of Barbados in the aftermath of the sugar boom. Justin Roberts has explored how the English plantation on the Surinam river in Guiana

¹⁰⁰ Ryan Dennis McGuinness, “‘They can now digest strong meats:’ Two Decades of Expansion, Adaptation, Innovation, and Maturation on Barbados, 1680-1700” (PhD dissertation, University of Edinburgh, 2017), p. 168; Svalastog, ‘Mastering the Worst of Trades’, p. 193.

¹⁰¹ Borucki, Eltis, and Wheat, ‘Atlantic History and the Slave Trade to Spanish America’, p. 444, fn. 30.

¹⁰² Roberts and Beamish, ‘Venturing Out’, p. 52.

was the first 'satellite' colony settled by itinerant Barbadians. Just three days sail from Barbados and with copious amounts of alluvial land available for pasturage and sugar cultivation, Surinam served as the main destination for members of the Barbadian diaspora until the colony was surrendered to the Dutch during negotiations over the Treaty of Breda in 1667. The initial planting of the Surinam colony in 1650 was not financed by Barbadian merchants, however, but by wealthy royalist exiles like Francis Lord Willoughby, who personally invested £26,000.¹⁰³

After the Restoration, Barbadian colonial schemes increased in number and intensity. The explanation usually given for this change is that planters on Barbados were under increasing economic pressure due to the declining fertility of their plantations, and the scarcity of arable land to expand into. The densely settled island also left little in the way of opportunities for time-expired servants and the younger sons of planters to own land themselves.¹⁰⁴ Another part of the explanation for why Barbadian expansion projects increased in the mid-1660s was that there was now an increasingly assertive merchant community resident in port towns on Barbados, looking to expand the sugar frontier beyond the shores of their island and thus create new opportunities for capital investment. In 1664, for instance, a group of merchants and planters from Barbados pooled their resources to purchase the island of St. Lucia from Thomas Warner, who claimed to be acting as a representative of the indigenous Carib population. The Barbadian settlement of St. Lucia quickly faltered due to disease and violent conflict with the Caribs. Within two years it had been abandoned.¹⁰⁵

The involvement of Barbadian merchants in the initial settlement of Carolina was more extensive and long-lasting than the abortive St. Lucia venture. In 1663 a 'Company of Barbadian Adventurers', made up of 85 investors, dispatched an exploratory mission to the Florida coast. This effort was spearheaded by the Barbadian merchants and ship captains Anthony Long, William Hilton, and Peter Fabian, who set sail from Speightstown on their expedition in August 1663. In a promotional pamphlet published shortly

¹⁰³ *Ibid.*, pp. 52-53; Roberts, 'Surrendering Surinam'.

¹⁰⁴ For a contemporary example, see The Earl of Carlisle, *A Declaration by James Earl of Carlisle, Lord of the Caribbee Islands, or Province of Carloliola*, 22 November 1647, Huntington Library, 91251 (repro). See also Roberts and Beamish, 'Venturing Out', pp. 50-52.

¹⁰⁵ Roberts and Beamish, 'Venturing Out', p. 53.

after their return, they extolled the potential of Carolina for agriculture and animal husbandry, and laid out the terms on which land was to be distributed by the Lords Proprietors to prospective colonists who were willing to invest capital and dispatch labourers there.¹⁰⁶ Three successive waves of colonists departed Barbados between 1665 and 1667 to try to establish a viable settlement in Carolina, focusing their efforts on the Cape Fear peninsula.¹⁰⁷ As Roberts and Beamish note, ‘Barbados played a central role in pushing for a Carolina colony, shaping the proprietorship that governed it, and providing the capital necessary for settlement’.¹⁰⁸

Conclusion

This chapter has investigated why merchant capital was withdrawn from Barbados in the late 1650s and early 1660s, has offered some tentative suggestions of where this capital was reinvested, and has explored the multifaceted role played by Barbados in the structure of England’s empire after the Restoration. By 1672 Barbados was undoubtedly the wealthiest and most important colony in the English empire. A look ahead to the late seventeenth century suggests Barbadian merchants and planters managed to maintain this prosperity for several decades, with one historian recently presenting quantitative evidence to demonstrate how Barbados reached its peak economic moment in the early 1680s, contrary to the previous historiographical consensus which suggested a process of steady decline was underway at this time.¹⁰⁹ Even in the closing two decades of the seventeenth century, when the sugar boom had begun to wane and Jamaica had taken up the mantle of the *asiento* trade, Barbados remained the main port-of-call

¹⁰⁶ Anon., *A Relation of a Discovery lately made on the Coast of Florida (From Lat. 31. To 33 Deg. 45 Min. North-Lat.)* By William Hilton Commander, and Commissioner with Capt. Anthony Long, and Peter Fabian, in the Ship Adventure, which set Saylor from Spikes Bay, Aug. 10. 1663. and was set forth by several Gentlemen and Merchants of the Island of Barbadoes. Giving an account of the nature and temperature of the Soyl, the manners and disposition of the Natives, and whatsoever else is remarkable therein. Together with Proposals made by the Commissioners of the Lords Proprietors, to all such persons as shall become the first Settlers on the Rivers, Harbors, and Creeks there (London, 1664).

¹⁰⁷ Dunn, *Sugar and Slaves*, p. 112.

¹⁰⁸ Roberts and Beamish, ‘Venturing Out’, p. 59. See also Richard S. Dunn, ‘The English Sugar Islands and the Founding of South Carolina’, *South Carolina Historical Magazine*, Vol. 101, No. 2 (2000), pp. 142-154.

¹⁰⁹ McGuinness, ‘They can now digest strong meats’, p. 19.

for RAC vessels when dropping off enslaved Africans: Bridgetown received 86 more slave ships and 18,808 more enslaved Africans than Port Royal in this period.¹¹⁰ This demonstrates the huge demand for slave labour in a mature plantation economy, and how, ever since the onset of the sugar boom, Bridgetown had been the leading Caribbean market for the transatlantic slave trade.

Due to the growth of the Barbadian merchant community at mid-century, by the 1680s trade to and from Barbados was expansive. Efforts to circumvent the RAC's monopoly led independent merchants to drive a slave trade between Madagascar and Barbados, for example.¹¹¹ According to Richard Pares, by the early eighteenth century, there was a noticeable reduction in the business activities and status of the resident merchant community on Barbados and elsewhere in the British Caribbean, leading to a marked decline in their size and commercial stature. He suggests this was caused by the growth of the commission system, which meant only those involved in sugar production (i.e. planters and not merchants) received the financial backing from London needed to sustain business operations in the colonies.¹¹² Because my analysis ends in 1672, it has not been possible to assess the veracity of Pares' argument in this dissertation. But if correct, it indicates that the Barbadian merchant community experienced its halcyon days in the period analysed here, namely the 1650s and 1660s.

¹¹⁰ *Ibid.*, pp. 145-146.

¹¹¹ Bennett, 'The East India Company, Transnational Interactions, and the Formation of Forced Labour Regimes', pp. 72-73. On the seventeenth-century Madagascar slave trade more broadly, see Virginia Bever Platt, 'The East India Company and the Madagascar Slave Trade', *The William and Mary Quarterly*, Vol. 26, No. 4, (1969), pp. 548-577; James Armstrong, 'Madagascar and the Slave Trade in the Seventeenth Century', *Omalý sy Anio*, (1983-84), pp. 211-33.

¹¹² Pares, *Merchants and Planters*, p. 48.

Conclusion

This dissertation has undertaken the first systematic study of the English merchants who financed the Barbados sugar boom. It has traced how merchant capital was invested in the Barbadian economy during the 1640s, produced transformative social and economic changes on Barbados and in England over the next two decades, before being withdrawn in the 1660s and reinvested elsewhere. The analysis of the merchant financiers of the sugar boom developed in this dissertation has resulted in a modified narrative of Barbadian colonial development from the 1620s to the 1670s, which can be summarised as follows. Barbados was founded by Sir William Courteen in 1627 because a colony there was ideally placed to function as a resupply point in Courteen's existing trade with Dutch plantations on the Wild Coast of Guiana, and because the island also had the potential to act as a base for privateer attacks against Spanish America. However, many of the first Barbadian settlers looked to emulate the recent successes of colonists in Virginia by producing tobacco for export. Unfortunately for Barbadian plantation owners, throughout the 1630s the tobacco they cultivated was widely perceived as the 'worst of all tobaccos', and as a result English merchants were reluctant to trade with the island, preferring instead to focus their attentions on the better-quality leaf produced in Virginia. This meant that Dutch traders and markets were of increased importance to the inhabitants of Barbados in the first 15 years of settlement. The argument developed in Chapter One that the Barbadian economy was struggling at this early juncture due to the cultivation of poor-quality tobacco does not support Menard's interpretation of Barbadian colonial development in the pre-sugar era, and instead is more in line with Gragg's analysis.⁸⁷⁹

In the late 1630s and early 1640s Barbadian planters diversified the crops they produced for export, leading to increased commercial traffic between England and the colony. For instance, it is in this period that some powerful London merchants, including Maurice Thomson, William Pennoyer, and Richard Batson, first developed a trading relationship with the Barbados. However, it was the emergence of a commercial sugar industry in 1643, and the extraordinary economic opportunities presented by this new

⁸⁷⁹ Menard, *Sweet Negotiations*, ch. 1 & 2; Gragg, *Englishmen Transplanted*, pp. 89-92, 98.

commodity, which was responsible for attracting large numbers of merchant vessels and unprecedented amounts of investment into the island during the 1640s.

London merchants financed the rapid transition to sugar production on Barbados. These merchants not only directly invested in the Barbadian plantation economy, but also gave planters ready access to credit, enslaved Africans, and raw materials. An infusion of merchant capital precipitated institutional changes in the organisation of land and labour on Barbados. Integrated sugar plantations worked by hundreds of enslaved Africans first developed on Barbados in the immediate wake of the sugar boom, and would, in subsequent decades, be adopted in other colonies in the Caribbean region. The capital which London merchants used to finance the sugar boom was generated through a variety of domestic and global business activities. This challenges Brenner's assumption that the profits of previous American enterprise were reinvested in the development of the Barbadian sugar industry.⁸⁸⁰ Moreover, the political and economic uncertainty in England caused by the Civil War was a key reason why London merchants invested such large amounts of money in land and enslaved Africans in the colony during the 1640s. Historians of early modern England have not recognised the importance of the empire as an outlet for securing merchant capital during the tumultuous civil war years, principally because they have not placed the Caribbean colonies and the metropole into a single analytical frame. Indeed, the dependence of Barbadians on merchant direct investment and the London credit market does not support the claim that Barbados enjoyed virtual independence from England during the 1640s like historians have previously assumed.⁸⁸¹

An analysis of transatlantic slave trading voyages chartered by English merchants in the 1630s and 1640s, which draws upon a much broader range of source material than that used by other historians (e.g. court cases heard in the High Court of Admiralty and the Mayor's Court of London), has revealed that there is no surviving evidence for slave trading ventures to Barbados in the 1630s, and that the traffic in enslaved Africans to the island saw a marked increase in 1644-45, probably in response to the establishment of a

⁸⁸⁰ Brenner, *Merchants and Revolution*, p. 162.

⁸⁸¹ E.g. Gragg, *Englishmen Transplanted*, p. 42.

commercial sugar industry on Barbados in 1643. This new evidence challenges Menard's chronology of the rise of African slavery on Barbados, and instead reinforces the conclusions reached by Gragg, who has shown that enslaved Africans do not start appearing in Barbadian wills and plantation inventories until the mid-1640s at the earliest.⁸⁸²

There were 14 London merchants explored in Chapter Three who were, for all intents and purposes, the 'fathers' of African slavery in the British Empire. By being the first to charter voyages to Barbados via the West African coast in the early 1640s, these merchants made the decision to meet the escalating demand for unfree labour on the island by increasing English participation in the transatlantic slave trade, setting into motion a chain of events which would forever alter the demography of English colonies in the Caribbean and North America. Part of the reason why the population of enslaved Africans saw such a pronounced increase on Barbados in the 1640s was because of the desire of English merchants to tie up their capital in property overseas during the Civil War. Because of their customary status on the island as permanent and inheritable chattels, enslaved Africans were one of several outlets for merchant investment in these years. The money which London merchants poured into Barbadian land and labour in the 1640s challenges the broad assumption among historians that investing in the American colonies during the seventeenth century were inherently risky ventures.⁸⁸³ On Barbados, at least, there were numerous geographical, environmental, and political safeguards which helped to secure invested capital in the 1640s. Future research may reveal that direct investment into the American colonies by English merchants and members of the gentry was more prevalent in the seventeenth century than previously understood, and that contemporaries did not see such investments as hazardous as historians have suggested.

In the immediate aftermath of the mid-century sugar boom Barbados was the most important colony in the English empire. Indeed, it was argued in Chapter Five that the English empire had two core regions in this period: London and Barbados. This points towards a wider polycentricism of empire, taking us

⁸⁸² Menard, *Sweet Negotiations*, p. 47; Gragg, *Englishmen Transplanted*, p. 119.

⁸⁸³ E.g. Kupperman, *Providence Island*.

beyond the traditional mercantilist understanding of how empires operated in the early modern period. Empires were composed of multiple interdependent nodes and were thus a far more complex system than the binary ‘core-periphery’ model would have us believe. Some colonies usually portrayed as being at the ‘periphery’ of empire were, much like the metropole, important sources of capital, manpower, and expertise for the empire’s further growth. In the English empire during the 1660s, for example, Barbados functioned as a regional centre of trade and as a nursery for colonial expansion in the Caribbean and the Lower South. Moreover, the profits of the Barbados sugar boom were reinvested elsewhere in the empire, such as the Jamaican economy, the accounts of goldsmith-bankers in England, and the East India Company. One avenue for further research would be to trace in greater detail where the capital generated by the seventeenth-century Caribbean plantation system was reinvested, in order to investigate whether the profits of African slavery contributed to fundamental transformations which occurred in England at the turn of the eighteenth century, such as the ‘financial revolution’ and the growth of the fiscal-military state.

When viewed collectively, then, the new research presented in this dissertation encourages historians to reappraise Russell Menard’s revisionist critique of the ‘sugar revolution’ hypothesis.⁸⁸⁴ While I share Menard’s preference for the more prosaic term ‘sugar boom’, because I believe it more adequately captures what happened on Barbados in the mid-seventeenth century (an economic boom caused by sugar production), his claim to have overturned the ‘sugar revolution’ hypothesis entirely requires further scrutiny. An infusion of merchant capital into the Barbadian economy, and the work this did in financing the rapid development of a commercial sugar industry, did produce social and economic transformations which we could interpret as ‘revolutionary’, both on the island itself and in England.

On Barbados, for instance, the sugar boom led to the Africanisation of the island’s population, environmental degradation on an unprecedented scale, and the emergence of Barbados as a transnational centre of trade in the Caribbean. In England, the sugar boom facilitated changes in the organisation of

⁸⁸⁴ Menard, *Sweet Negotiations*, passim.

colonial commerce (the commission system) and led to social and political change in London. For example, the wealth generated by sugar and slavery on Barbados played a major role in propelling a cluster of merchants to the top of the London merchant community in the 1650s and early 1660s. They were well represented on the councils and committees formed to administer the American colonies and sat on the directorates of several overseas trading companies. This powerful group of merchants sought to make the Barbadian government amenable to their interests, and submitted numerous petitions to Parliament in the 1650s and 1660s, forming an informal pressure group which I argue constituted a progenitor of the eighteenth-century West India Interest. The results of my research into merchant involvement with the economy of Barbados in the 1630s and 1640s means I am convinced that it was the commercial opportunity presented by sugar, not other cash crops, which initiated these transformative changes. I therefore side with Larry Gragg, who has also argued that the evidence to support Menard's contention that demographic changes such as the rapid growth of African slavery were underway in the pre-sugar era (c.1627-1643) is strictly limited.⁸⁸⁵

This study has also contributed to a broader historiographical debate over whether metropolitan capital stimulated plantation development in the British Atlantic world prior to the American Revolution. There were two periods in which large amounts of capital provided by English merchants found an outlet in the Caribbean colonies: c.1640-1660 and c.1730-1776. Evidence presented in Chapters Two and Three demonstrated how in the mid-seventeenth century English merchants directly invested in plantation production on Barbados and extended long credit to prospective sugar planters. The reasons why merchants chose to inject so much capital into the Barbadian economy were multifaceted, but it has been argued that external factors unique to the 1640s, including the English Civil War and the collapse of the Brazilian sugar industry, heavily influenced merchant patterns of investment. Most of the merchant financiers of the sugar boom withdrew their investments in the 1650s and early 1660s, and thereafter the

⁸⁸⁵ Larry Gragg, 'Review of Sweet Negotiations: Sugar, Slavery, and Plantation Agriculture in Early Barbados by Russell R. Menard', *The South Carolina Historical Magazine*, Vol. 108, No. 2 (2007), pp. 169-170.

rise of the commission system meant that direct investment and loans provided by English merchants became less significant to economic development in the English Caribbean for a period of approximately 70 years.

Between 1660 and 1730 the expansion of the plantation system in the Caribbean colonies was mainly financed locally. Profits generated through plantation production, the entrepôt trade to Spanish America, and privateering, were reinvested into the development of a commercial sugar industry on Jamaica, for example.⁸⁸⁶ Financing the purchase of land, the construction of sugar mills, and the acquisition of enslaved Africans in this manner was much more gradual when compared to the direct investment and extensions of credit which Barbadian planters received in the 1640s and 1650s. The infusion of merchant capital into Barbados in the mid-seventeenth century explains why the colony underwent rapid transformations which constituted a 'sugar boom' or 'sugar revolution'. Elsewhere in the English Caribbean, it took much longer for a fully-developed sugar industry to emerge (until at least the 1680s and 1690s), principally because a variety of factors relating to geography, environment, and warfare meant that planters there had limited outside assistance from metropolitan merchants when compared to their counterparts on Barbados half a century earlier. Historians of the Atlantic world need to be more sensitive to the local geographic and environmental conditions of different Caribbean islands, and to how external political and economic contexts impacted the process of colonial development in different decades. All too often historians have generalised about how the Caribbean sugar industry was financed, glossing over the formative period of the seventeenth century, and taking a 'one model fits all' approach. I am convinced that further research on the economic development of other islands in the English and French Caribbean during the seventeenth century will show that a more nuanced analysis is needed.

In the 1730s capital provided by English merchants once again became a significant means through which plantation development was financed.⁸⁸⁷ Institutional changes in the colonial credit market after the

⁸⁸⁶ Zahedieh, 'Trade, Plunder, and Economic Development'.

⁸⁸⁷ Pares, *Merchants and Planters*, pp. 47-50; Smith, 'Merchants and Planters Revisited'; Nash, 'The Organization of Trade and Finance', pp. 123-127. For the example of Henry Lascelles, a merchant whose business career reflects the revival in the importance of merchant capital to the American colonies between the 1730s and 1770s (in 1753, for

passage of the 1732 Colonial Debts Act, which introduced 'legal uniformity in the treatment of debtors' throughout the British empire, led to a spike in short-term credit and long-term loans being offered to Caribbean planters by commission agents in England.⁸⁸⁸ This helped to expedite the process of plantation development and the purchase of enslaved Africans in the mid-eighteenth century, especially on Jamaica.⁸⁸⁹ However, unlike 1640s Barbados, English merchants did not invest directly in the sugar industry after 1730, and instead just advanced capital to planters.

Historians are divided about the origins of the capital which merchants operating as commission agents extended to planters in the mid-eighteenth century. S. D. Smith suggests that English merchants were investing a lot of new capital into Caribbean economies.⁸⁹⁰ But because commission firms retained as much as 80 percent of their profits, the general consensus is that the loans offered by commission agents were mostly made up of capital recycled from the sale of sugar that had been sent to England by Caribbean planters.⁸⁹¹ For the moment, then, it remains uncertain whether Adam Smith was correct to suggest that the wealth of the British Caribbean was created by metropolitan capital 'overspilling'.⁸⁹²

Based upon the new research presented in this dissertation, it is clear that the Barbados sugar boom in the 1640s and 1650s was financed predominantly by capital supplied by English merchants, most of whom were based in the City of London. But until we know more about the origins of the capital loaned to planters by mid-eighteenth-century commission firms, all we can say is Richard Pares' conclusion that 'after some initial loans in the earliest period which merely primed the pump, the wealth of the West Indies was created out of the profits of the West Indies themselves', is probably closest to the truth.⁸⁹³

instance, he had £226,772 tied up in 78 separate loans to Caribbean planters), see Smith, 'Merchants and Planters Revisited', pp. 461-462; Burnard, *Planters, Merchants, and Slaves*, p. 121. Even after the American Revolution, in the years leading up to Emancipation, loans of increasing size were given to Caribbean sugar planters by London commission agents. S. G. Checkland, 'Finance for the West Indies, 1780-1815', *The Economic History Review*, Vol. 10, No. 3 (1958), pp. 461-469.

⁸⁸⁸ Smith, 'Merchants and Planters Revisited', pp. 455-456.

⁸⁸⁹ *Ibid.*, pp. 457-458.

⁸⁹⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 446. See also Smith, *Slavery, Family and Gentry Capitalism*, pp. 139-176.

⁸⁹¹ Pares, *Merchants and Planters*, pp. 49-50; Nash, 'The Organization of Trade and Finance', p. 127.

⁸⁹² Smith, *Wealth of Nations*, p. 463.

⁸⁹³ Pares, *Merchants and Planters*, p. 50.

This dissertation has also deepened historical understanding about early modern merchants, and what they did with their capital. My research into the merchant financiers of the sugar boom casts doubt over Robert Brenner's social analysis of the seventeenth-century English merchant community, and in particular his categorisation of 'company merchants' and 'new merchants'.⁸⁹⁴ For example, I have found examples of so-called 'company merchants' investing in Barbadian plantations during the 1640s (e.g. Riccard, Williams, Browne), something which should not be possible if Brenner's rigid categorisation were correct. Moreover, if Brenner had pushed his study into the late 1650s and 1660s, he would have seen that many of his 'new merchants' were incorporated into directorates of overseas trading companies which possessed exclusive monopolies (e.g. Maurice Thomson, who became governor of the EIC in 1657). Indeed, in Chapter Four it was shown how, after Maurice Thomson and his business partners fell into short-term disfavour with Cromwell after 1653, a new cohort of merchants, most of whom had invested in the Barbados sugar boom and were associated with Martin Noell, stepped in and secured appointment to the committees and councils formed in Westminster to administer the American plantations and overseas trade. This takes us beyond Brenner's analysis (which ends in 1653), and demonstrates how his 'new merchant leadership' did not retain power in Westminster under the Protectorate and Restoration governments.

This study also sheds light on the attitude of early modern merchants towards politics and government. By analysing their petitions, it has been shown how the merchant financiers of the sugar boom wanted Barbados to be governed in a way which suited their investments. While not interested themselves in travelling overseas and becoming directly involved in colonial governance, they were keen to install trusted family members into specific offices to advance their private business interests. And when faced with the prospect of partisan violence on Barbados, these merchants expended time and energy to try to encourage colonial inhabitants to reconcile their political differences, which they hoped would ensure the

⁸⁹⁴ Brenner, *Merchants and Revolution*, passim.

continued security of their assets. Historians have made similar observations about investors in Ireland during the 1640s.⁸⁹⁵ In the future, therefore, comparative research might reveal that the attitude we have seen displayed by the 'Barbados merchants' towards politics and government was common to many businessmen in the seventeenth century.

By placing the merchant financiers of the Barbados sugar boom and their trading networks at the centre of my analysis, in this dissertation I have worked at the intersection of three historiographical subfields which are usually studied separately: the history of early modern England, Caribbean history, and global history. This dissertation is therefore in the vanguard of the new trans-Atlantic history, which seeks to make big points about the history of early English expansion in the Americas, Africa, and Asia through granular research.⁸⁹⁶ This study has made two main contributions to our understanding of the global dimensions of early English expansion.

First is how, by investigating the array of trading activities which the English merchants who financed the Barbados sugar boom participated in, this dissertation has contributed to the efforts of a new generation of historians to situate the commercial pursuits of English merchants in a global context. A recent spate of PhD dissertations written by Edmond Smith, Aske Brock, and Julie Svalastog reflects the revival in interest in the merchant community of seventeenth-century England.⁸⁹⁷ A distinctive feature of this new historiography has been an effort to study the trading activities of English merchants from a global perspective. Smith, for instance, has demonstrated how members of the East India Company had diversified investment portfolios between 1599 and 1625, and argues that this highlights 'the global

⁸⁹⁵ Bottigheimer, *English Money and Irish Land*; Lindley, 'Irish Adventurers and Godly Militants in the 1640s'.

⁸⁹⁶ For other examples of the new trans-Atlantic history, see Alison Games, *Web of Empire*; Edmond Smith, 'The Global Interests of London's Commercial Community, 1599-1625: Investment in the East India Company', *The Economic History Review* (2018); Lauren Working, *The Making of an Imperial Polity: Civility and America in the Jacobean Metropolis* (Cambridge, 2020); Misha Ewen, 'Women Investors and the Virginia Company in the Early Seventeenth Century', *The Historical Journal*, Vol. 62, No. 4 (2019), pp. 853-874.

⁸⁹⁷ Smith, 'Networks of the East India Company'; Aske Brock, 'The Company Director: Commerce, State, and Society' (PhD dissertation, University of Kent, 2016); Julie Svalastog, 'Mastering the worst of trades: England's early Africa companies and their traders, 1618-1672' (PhD dissertation University of Leiden, 2018).

connections between the various strands of England's overseas development'. Brock has used social network analysis to investigate the overlapping membership of English merchants in the directorates of corporations involved in trade to various parts of the world.⁸⁹⁸

This study contributes to this growing body of scholarship by using a prosopographical approach to trace how capital was created through a variety of domestic and overseas ventures in the 1630s, funnelled into the coffers of English merchants, before being invested into the emerging system of plantation slavery on Barbados in the 1640s. English merchants with a commercial interest in domestic retailing, the cloth trade, American tobacco, West African commerce, the East India Company, the Levant Company, and the Brazilian sugar trade all contributed capital to the sugar boom. This suggests that the capital used to finance the rapid expansion of plantation slavery on Barbados had global origins. Other historians of Barbados and the Atlantic world have not appreciated the diverse range of overseas commercial activities which English traders to the Caribbean participated in during the seventeenth century, principally because they tend to confine their analyses to the shores of the Atlantic basin.

Second, is how this dissertation has contributed to the process by which the early modern Caribbean is currently being integrated into global history. The importance of the Caribbean colonies has been understated in the historiography of early America for decades, but in recent years, an exciting new vein of scholarship has gone a long way towards addressing this imbalance. Historians are increasingly highlighting the significance of the early modern Caribbean as a dynamic centre of change within the broader currents of early American history. Most scholars would now agree that, in the minds of contemporaries, it was the sugar-producing Caribbean colonies which were at the heart of the seventeenth-century English empire, and not the settlements in North America which would eventually coalesce to form the United States.⁸⁹⁹ Although historians with an interest in 'vast early America' now appreciate the significance of Caribbean colonies such as Barbados, the early modern Caribbean has still not yet been firmly integrated into global history. This is despite the fact that, by the turn of the

⁸⁹⁸ Smith, 'The Global Interests of London's Commercial Community'; Brock, 'The Company Director'.

⁸⁹⁹ E.g. Roberts, 'Surrendering Surinam'; Roper, ed., *The Torrid Zone*.

eighteenth century, the sugar colonies of the Greater and Lesser Antilles had become a pivot point in world trade and are thus an ideal case study for exploring the interconnectedness of global commerce and migration in the early modern period.⁹⁰⁰

This study has highlighted the global significance of the Barbados sugar boom by analysing how the same merchants who financed the development of plantation slavery on Barbados also devoted their energy and capital to expanding the sugar frontier to the island of Assada in northwest Madagascar from 1649-50. These merchants drew upon their previous experience with Barbados in order to fashion a colonial model for the type of plantation economy they wanted to see develop on Assada. Indeed, as I have shown in my other published work, the Barbadian plantation system was repeatedly used as a colonial model by English colonisers in the South Atlantic and Indian Ocean during the seventeenth century.⁹⁰¹ Not only does this demonstrate the global significance of social and economic developments in mid-seventeenth-century Barbados, but it also raises the profile of the Caribbean islands within the field of global history. The analysis of early modern empire developed in this dissertation is therefore more expansive and ‘global’ than is usually seen in current studies of seventeenth-century colonialism, which will hopefully encourage future historians to conceptualise the constituent parts of the seventeenth-century English empire in America, Asia, and the Mediterranean as an integrated whole.

⁹⁰⁰ There have recently been some steps taken in this direction, however. In September 2018, for instance, a two-day symposium was convened at the John Carter Brown Library in Providence, Rhode Island, which explored the concept of the ‘Early Modern Global Caribbean’. A corresponding trend involves the leading journal of early American studies, *The William and Mary Quarterly (WMQ)*, which under the editorship of Joshua Piker has recently adopted the concept of ‘Vast Early America’.

⁹⁰¹ Bennett, ‘The East India Company, Transnational Interactions and the Formation of Forced Labour Regimes’, ch. 1.

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Table A3 [Redacted]

Appendix 2. The Merchant Investors in the Barbados Sugar Boom

Table A4. [Redacted]

Appendix 3. The Operation of the Barbados Sugar Industry in the Seventeenth Century

This appendix will briefly outline the agricultural methods used by planters on Barbados to cultivate sugar, and will also explain the industrial processes through which the cane was refined into sugar crystals.

The seventeenth-century sugar industry was sustained by intensive plantation agriculture and the construction of wooden refineries where raw cane was processed. The inhabitants of Barbados who first experimented with the cultivation of sugar in the early 1640s drew upon their experience with growing tobacco and planted their cane stalks upright in small holes dug approximately three feet apart. Planters and overseers on Barbados quickly learnt that this method was ineffective. The freestanding canes were secured in the soil by only one root and were therefore susceptible to being blown over by heavy winds and tropical rains before they had ripened. Plantation owners instead began to instruct their field hands to dig trenches, half a foot wide, within which two cane stalks from a previous crop would be laid down and covered with soil. By encouraging numerous new stalks to sprout from the buried canes, this technique provided better anchorage for the young plants in adverse weather conditions, reduced erosion of the fertile topsoil, and produced a yield of greater density.¹

In the first couple of months after the plants had sprouted, the young shoots were tended to by field hands, who would remove weeds and use hoes to turn over the soil. After 12 to 15 months, the plants had grown to between 6 and 8 feet tall, and the crop was fully ripe. The mature cane was harvested by indentured servants or enslaved Africans working in the fields, who used small saws known as 'handbills' to cut the plant around six inches from the ground. The labourers then used the same tool to remove the top of the plant from the cane, and strip off the blades that grew along the side of the stalk. The canes were bundled into large pack saddles and carried to the sugar mill on the backs of asses.²

¹ Charles Cesar de Rochefort, *The History of the Caribby-Islands*, trans. John Davies (London, 1666), pp. 59-60; Ligon, *True and Exact History*, pp. 157-158; Gragg, *Englishmen Transplanted*, p. 100; Menard, *Sweet Negotiations*, p. 71.

² Ligon, *True and Exact History*, pp. 157-158; Gragg, *Englishmen Transplanted*, pp. 100-101.

The process by which raw cane was transformed into sugar crystals was, by seventeenth century standards, a sophisticated industrial procedure. In the 1640s and 1650s, when planters were still learning the most efficient techniques to refine sugar, the inhabitants of Barbados used a three-roller mill to grind their cane. This animal-powered device, often described as an *ingenio* by English authors in the seventeenth century, was contained within a large wooden structure.³ Hardy draught animals, including small horses, oxen, and cattle, were coaxed into harnesses attached to the central roller by wooden 'sweeps'. They provided the force necessary to turn the cogs of the mill and drive the three rollers. Ligon observed that sometimes five horses were needed to supply power to the mill when large amounts of cane were being processed.

Indentured servants and enslaved Africans would then perform the dangerous work of feeding the raw cane into the mechanism. The motion of the rollers would crush the cane and press out the valuable juice, where it would collect in a cistern. It was important that the extracted juice did not remain in the cistern above 24 hours, otherwise it would quickly turn rancid. To prevent spoilage the cane juice was quickly ladled into a series of copper stills. The juice would be heated to extreme temperatures by furnaces so that workers could skim off any impurities (known as molasses) that should rise to the surface of the boiling liquid. In one of the most crucial steps in the clarification process, an alkaline substance made from water and ash was added to the liquid, which after further stirring, would cause the juice to coagulate and become viscous. The cane juice was then transferred to another cistern and allowed to cool. This tiresome procedure persisted for 24 hours a day, beginning on Mondays at one in the morning, and continuing through until Saturday evenings, with the furnaces of the boiling house only being extinguished for religious observance on Sundays. This demanding work schedule, which required extreme physical

³ *Ingenio* is a corruption of the Portuguese word for sugar mill (*engenho*). This etymology demonstrates the importance of Brazilian precedents to the Barbadian sugar industry. The close association with the word 'ingenious' also indicates how the operation of the sugar mill was considered to be an advanced piece of technology in the seventeenth century. The term '*ingenio*' does not appear in the 1654 edition of Thomas Blount's dictionary, called *Glossographia*. It does, however, appear in the 1661 edition, with the entry 'in *Barbado's* they call the house or mill where they make Sugar by this name'. Blount cites Ligon's *True and Exact History* as the source of this information (published in 1657), which may explain why the term does not appear in the 1654 edition.

exertion in sweltering heat, explains why industrial accidents and the deaths of indentured servants, enslaved Africans, and draught animals were so common.⁴

The final step in the production of sugar, known as curing, would determine the quality of the end product and the price it could command in European markets. Workers would pour the clarified sugar into porous earthenware pots, which allowed the liquid molasses and any other final impurities to drain through the bottom of the vessel. After a month, the dried sugar granules would then be knocked from the pots, leaving an inferior sugar of dark brown appearance known in the seventeenth century as ‘muscovado’ sugar.⁵ If a planter was content to dispatch raw muscovado sugar from Barbados to England, he would then instruct his indentured servants and enslaved Africans to transport his merchandise to coastal storehouses on the backs of asses, where it would be stored in chests and either sold to merchants or shipped on the planter’s own account.

Beginning in the 1650s, however, Barbadians began to export higher grade white sugar in increasing quantities. Further refining was required to produce this valuable commodity. While it was drying in earthenware pots, the surface of the muscovado sugar was coated with a layer of moist clay. As the water from the clay percolated down through the sugar, it dissolved further impurities. After approximately four months, the sugar loaf would be removed from the vessel, and the white sugar at the top would be cut away from the brown coloured sugar below. If the claying process was successful, the end product would be white sugar of increased purity, sweetness, and value.⁶ The various tariffs placed on white sugar and brown muscovado sugar by customs officials in England demonstrates how the claying process could greatly increase the value of an enterprising planter’s merchandise. Between December 1654 and December 1655, the tariff attached to imports of brown sugar produced by planters on Barbados was 2/8

⁴ For further information on the operation of the three-roller sugar mill and the clarification process, see Ligon, *True and Exact History*, pp. 160-161; Menard, *Sweet Negotiations*, pp. 74-75; Gragg, *Englishmen Transplanted*, p. 100.

⁵ Raw brown sugar was commonly known as ‘muscovado’ sugar among Englishmen in the seventeenth century. Scholars believe that this term derives from the Portuguese word *mascavado*, which translates as ‘unfinished’ or ‘incomplete’. Menard, *Sweet Negotiations*, p. 75.

⁶ For further information about the curing of sugar on Barbados in the seventeenth century, see Ligon, *True and Exact History*, pp. 161-163; Menard, *Sweet Negotiations*, pp. 75-76; Gragg, *Englishmen Transplanted*, pp. 101-102. Similar techniques were used on Hispaniola and in the Brazilian sugar industry. For Hispaniola, see Anon., *America: Or Exact Description of the West Indies: More especially of those Provinces which are under the Dominion of the King of Spain* (London, 1655), pp. 161-167. For Brazil, see Schwartz, *Sugar Plantations in the Formation of Brazilian Society*, pp. 98-131.

pounds per hundredweight, which pales in comparison to the tariff of 9/8 pounds 4 pence per hundredweight imposed on white sugar.⁷ Despite the greater profits which could be made from refining sugar on Barbados, the survival of an entry book containing data on exports from August 1664 to August 1665 suggests that in the early period of the Barbados sugar industry raw muscovado sugar was shipped to England far more frequently any other commodity (including white sugar).⁸ It was generally left to sugar bakers in England to refine the muscovado sugar further. These expert chefs would then deploy their culinary skills to craft expensive sweet dishes for wealthy members of English society.⁹

⁷ TNA, CO 1/12, f. 126A.

⁸ Bodleian Library, Ms. Eng. Hist. b. 122, 'A Coppie Journall of Entries Made in the Custom House of Barbados. Beginning August the 10th, 1664 and Ending August the 10th, 1665'. Gary Puckrein has tabulated the data contained within this manuscript source. Using the journal entries, he has calculated that shipments of muscovado sugar made up 70% of the total value of exports from Barbados for the period between August 1664 and August 1665. This exceeds all other commodities produced on the island, including refined white sugar (12%), cotton (11%), rum (11%), molasses (4%), tobacco (0.82%), ginger (0.79%), indigo (0.08%), fustic woods (0.06), and miscellaneous goods (0.03%). Puckrein, *Little England*, p. 60.

⁹ Mintz, *Sweetness and Power*, p. 131.

Appendix 4. [Redacted]