

A late long eighteenth-century description of the Barbados written by

Alexander Anderson (1748-1811)

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Abstract

This, for the first time, provides a transcription of the recently made-public manuscript written by the Scottish botanist Alexander Anderson, of Barbados, written at the end of the long eighteenth-century. Anderson provides a brief (12 page) geography, topology and natural history of the country, and notes the adverse affects that the industrial plantation monoculture has had on its flora and fauna, and on the current situation of those who reside there. He also notes some common diseases (their symptoms and possible causes). An introductory essay provides some background on Anderson (1748-1811), whilst a commentary on the manuscript offers page by page context.

Introduction

The following contribution presents for the first time, an annotated transcription of 'the geography, topology, and natural resources' of Barbados, c.1809, written by the Scottish naturalist, and Superintendent of the St Vincent Botanical Garden, Alexander Anderson (1748-1811).¹ The Manuscript (Linn Soc MS/610) is held by the Linnean Society of London and can be accessed online.² For readability, words that

¹ Transcription carried out by Dr Gabrielle Storey and Dr Christina Welch as part of the UKRI-funded project 'Unearthing the contribution of indigenous & enslaved African knowledge systems to the St Vincent Botanical Garden under Dr Anderson (1748-1811)' Ref AH/W008505/1.

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Anderson crossed through on the manuscript have been removed, but otherwise this transcription is as written. The online publication of the manuscript by the Linnean Society, and its transcription here here have been made possible through UKRI funding.³ As was usual at the time, full-stops worked also as commas, capital letters, compared to today's usage, seem random and erratically placed, and words with a double-s ('ss') were written as 'fs'.

Alexander Anderson, his life and work

Alexander Anderson was born in Scotland on 22 March 1748. Little is known about his early life but from his own writings we know he had an older brother called John. Church records show that he came from the Abernethy and Kincardine parish in the Speyside region of the Highlands (once part of Morayshire), close to the Cairngorm mountains. His parents, John Anderson and Kath Fraser, baptised John (born August 23rd 1745) on September 3rd 1745, and Alexander (born March 22nd 1748) on March 23rd 1748. His parents married in 1744 in the village of Belnaglach, Morayshire (no longer extant), and as such Anderson lived and grew up in a relatively poor and very rural part of Scotland (Rampini 1897: 306), but one where he was surrounded by hills, mountains, loch and forests; doubtless it his childhood home that inspired his love of the natural world and his desire to contemplate topographies such as that below.

Nothing can be traced of Anderson's school days but he did attend the University of Edinburgh in 1770 (he was 22-years old by then) to study medicine; he must therefore have received a solid education. However, he appears to have not

³ UKRI Funding information <https://gtr.ukri.org/projects?ref=AH%2FW008505%2F1>

matriculated his second year at Edinburgh, and definitely did not graduate (Edinburgh *List of the Graduates* 1897). Indeed his first year matriculation record notes only Chemistry which may mean he attended the lectures of William Cullen (1710-1790); Cullen was well-known for his practical experiments, and had an interest in agricultural chemistry and had travelled to the West Indies (Passmore 2001, Doyle 2024). That Anderson did not gain a degree, nor it seems matriculate in medicine, is important as some twenty-years later, in January 1791, Anderson was elected as a Fellow of the Royal Society of Edinburgh as a surgeon and botanist (RSE 2006, 21). However, there is no record of him ever gaining formal medical or surgical qualifications, although he did briefly work as a surgical apprentice as we will shortly see.

The next trace of Anderson is in London at the Apothecaries Garden at Chelsea (now Chelsea Physic Garden – herein Chelsea) in 1771/72. Established in 1673 Chelsea was the second oldest botanic garden in the UK, had a heated glasshouse installed in 1723, and was the garden where the Sir Hans Sloane (1660-1753), the naturalist, collector, and physician (including briefly to Christopher Monck, the Governor of Jamaica) trained. Sloane passed through Barbados on his way to Jamaica and information about plants and animals on and from the island features in his 2-Volume work *A Voyage to the Islands of Madera, Barbadoes, Neives, St Christopher, and Jamaica... in two volumes* (1725).

Established specifically to teach apprentices studying the medicinal uses of plants, at Chelsea, Anderson worked under William Forsyth (1737-1804), a fellow Scot. Forsyth had moved from Aberdeenshire in 1763 to train at Chelsea under the

directorship of the English botanist Philip Miller (1691-1771) who had been specifically appointed to the post in 1722 by Sloane. Forsyth became head gardener at Chelsea in 1771, and in 1774 created a rock garden there, the first in Europe. The Apothecaries Garden at Chelsea was therefore a highly prestigious place, and thus we can surmise that Anderson deliberately left his academic studies in medicine at Edinburgh to work more practically at this esteemed location in London. That he was not a man of learning, that he did not have 'enough of scientific Education to be depended upon', but was a man of 'natural parts & activity' was an accusation made of him and his work by Sir Joseph Banks in December 1789 (Banks 2010 [1789], Letter 586).

However it seems what Chelsea offered was not sufficient for Anderson as on December 5th 1774, he set sail from London for New York on the ship Beulah. In New York he stayed with his brother John, who himself had emigrated some years earlier, and was working as a printer (Toscano 2020). John's son, also named Alexander (born 21 April 1775), went on to become a famous engraver and a "distinguished doctor" (Toscano 2019, also see Pomeroy 1990, and Burr 1893); he spent a couple of months with his uncle in the St Vincent Botanical Garden in the spring of 1798.

Anderson clearly did not part on bad terms with Chelsea and Forsyth as the two men exchanged correspondence, and letters sent by Anderson to Forsyth dating between July 1775 and July 1795 are held in the archives of the Royal Botanical Garden, Kew (MS FOR 1-4). In 1779 Forsyth became the chief superintendent of the royal garden of St. James and Kensington, giving Anderson a high-status personal contact.

We have some information on Anderson's time in America. His 1776 letters inform Forsyth he has collected 'Hundreds' of plants that he is 'entirely ignorant of'. As well as sending seeds and plant specimens to Forsyth, he mentions an unnamed acquaintance who is requesting specific specimens. Anderson bemoans the want of Linnaeus' as 'it is not to be got here & there is none that know anything of botany'. Carl Linnaeus (1707-1778) was an esteemed Swedish biologist and physician. In 1736 Linnaeus was in London visiting Sloane, and Chelsea, where he taught the aforementioned Miller about his new way of subdividing plants. Miller was a preponent of John Ray (1627-1705) and his classification system. Ray's work had the typical Biblical framework of the time, a form of natural philosophy and natural theology; the Bible was not just 'a source of faith and moral instruction' but a historical document (Stearn 1986:109). His plant classification system was based on polynomials, a system which Linnaeus replaced with binomials (Stearn 1986, 118). Interestingly enough, Anderson wrote some of his plant catalogues in polynomials, although he largely used the Linnaean system; given Anderson was taught by Forsyth, who had himself been tutored by Miller, and that Miller only adopted the Linnaean systems towards the end of his life (Stöver 1794, 89-90), it is perhaps of little surprise that Anderson knew both systems.

Anderson's letters of 1776 include information about the how 'peace & quiet' is disturbed by the 'horror of a Civil War', that drums, guns and bayonets are all around and that 'all American from 16 years old to 60 is in Arms'. Anderson was a first-hand witness to the American War of Independence, but being British, his sympathies lay with his own side. His brother however, was of a republican bent and in August

1776, John and family (his wife Sarah and young son) fled their New York home and John's business as the 'British army approached' (Anderson in Burr 1893, 79).

Whether this was a source of tension between the brothers is unknown, but John named his first born son after his brother so regardless, family ties were strong.

More letters were exchanged between Anderson and Forsyth in 1778. When Anderson is in Philadelphia, where again he collects plants and seeds, he also improves his Latin and learns French. In his letters he mentions the various flora and fauna that are new to him, including the Humming Bird; he was clearly keen on collecting specimens as he requests 'directions for the preserving of Serpents and Birds'. He also notes he has observed 'the virtue of small plants as ascertained by the Country people and Indians'. Here he is referring to folk medicines and as such demonstrating his interests and skills in ethnobotany.

In late 1778, he notes he had been in New York intent in heading to Surinam but the voyage had been thwarted by being taken prisoner of war by an American privateer. In early 1779 he is in St Pieres (Saint-Pierre), in Martinique, noting that 'the French treat their prisoners with a deal of humanity and kindness – far more so than the Americans'. Between 1776 and 1778 France were providing 'clandestine aid to the United States' (Spiegel 2021) but were officially neutral, and as such Anderson was parolled to a French territory. Whilst there he took 'every opportunity to collect Fossils, Shells &c'; it seems that being taken captive did not deter his curiosity in the natural world.

Next we find him in St Lucia in 1780. By this time the island was in the hands of the British after being taken from the French in late 1778; we can only assume that Anderson, as a PoW on parole, was exchanged (see Morieux 2019). Here Anderson notes his health is not good. He complains of the ague and an intermittent fever stating that 'the air of this island is mortal to most Europeans and very few constitutions can stand it'; the heat which was 'oftentimes almost intolerable' and the 'inhospitable region' made his observations of 'Vegetable, Animal or Mineral' difficult. However, despite this he asks Forsyth about how parasitical plants might be preserved so he could transport them to the Chelsea hot-house. He was at this time staying with a William Grant, the Collector of His Majesty's Customs; Grant was 'given to natural philosophy' and Anderson's interest in this area is evident in his own musings on the Deluge.

In St Lucia, Anderson located the plant he called *quina* or *china* (Davidson 1783). The plant was sent to London for testing and was eventually described and named as *Cinchona santaeluciae*, a relative of *C. officinalis*, the source of quinine'. Sadly although 'it tasted as bitter as quinine, it did not contain the cinchona alkaloids' (Howard 1996:16). Anderson believing the plant to be medicinal, had taken it to Dr George Young who was working at the St Lucia general hospital; Young had been exiled from St Vincent by the French when they occupied the island in June 1779 where he had been employed at the St Vincent Botanical Garden since it's establishment in 1765. Anderson gained a position with Young as a Hospital Mate, unable to do more due to his lack of anatomical knowledge. He stayed on the island until the end of 1783 apart from a few months that year when he was in Barbados by the invitation of General Mathew, Commander-in-the chief of the Windward Islands;

a letter dated September was sent from 'Barbadoes'. It appears that Banks and also Brownlow-North, the plant-collecting Bishop of Winchester, were interested in Anderson and his plant-hunting around the Caribbean. Anderson 'examined Barbadoes to [his] wish in two weeks' time', noting there were 'some things in it to attract one's view for a few days, but it is not worth spending long time in'. He sent Forsyth seeds and specimens, as well as some fossils from St. Lucia. In the letter he notes that he had made observations on the island and had sent these to Forsyth; it is likely the manuscript transcribed below is written from his original notes.

In early 1784, Anderson travels to Grenada with Mathews; both men hoped a botanic garden could be established in the country with Anderson as director, but such an establishment required the patronage of the King. That did not come to pass, but with St Vincent now back in British hands, Anderson was appointed superintendent of the St Vincent Botanical Garden. Under his superintendentship it became a global plant hub, and he regularly recorded the plant species growing in the Garden. He also penned natural histories of several islands, and wrote both a natural history and general history of St Vincent. Anderson's work in the Botanical Garden was remarkable for many reasons, and an online exhibition held at the British Library (see URL below) provides some information on Anderson and the garden, those who worked there, and a selection of plants that had medicinal, economic, or ornamental use. https://kew.iro.bl.uk/concern/exhibition_items/3f9c9365-4556-469b-ac6d-4114f9120408?fbclid=IwAR11A_8KVbq-Z0W5fYmTwcYyscJI34fbXfYsto_2VusyEv_KPPRacbcIYBM

Transcription with Commentary

Page 1

Barbados

This Island as to situation. structure & component parts appears to have no affinity or connection with the range of Islands generally known by the appellation of Carib/ Windward Islands. in comparison to them it may be deem'd flat or level. to the nearest of them it is situate about 30 Leagues to windward and lye nearly parallel to St. Vincent. Bridge Town the capital is in 13°.10" north Latitude & Kingstown on St. Vincent 13°-7. both situate near the S. ends of their respective Islands. Hughes says its greatest length is 20 Miles & greatest Breadth 13 $\frac{3}{4}$ miles. its figure is not inaptly compar'd to a shoulder of mutton to that shape it has certainly a resemblance. Hughes gives 915 feet for the elevation above the sea for the highest part of it. therefore as to altitude it is a molehill in comparison to its neighbouring Islands. hence being so little above the Horizon it is generally envelop'd in Haze^{and} not seen from sea but at a short distance sometimes 3 or 4 miles. The most experienced of navigators frequently miss it. yet in leaving it. it is kept in view to a considerable distance. Altho' I have said it is a low flat country. yet it must not be understood that I mean a level or plain. for the greater part of its surface is rugged & much broken and the whole of it a mass of Madripore. in many parts are present bare without any

vegetable soil. remaining composed of sharp rugged points of the Madripore or pieces of coral. consequently barren and unfit for cultivation of any thing. But the cultivable land is level and on the S:E corner & where the coral Rocks terminate

Commentary: page 1 sets out a general overview of the island. The distance from St. Vincent, where Anderson spent much of his time, is give as 30 Leagues, this equates to 166 kilometres (103 miles). The accurate distance is 179 kilometres, or 111 miles. The latitude values comparing Bridgetown and Kingstown are roughly accurate (respectively 13 N 59.6 W; 13.15 N 61 W). The accurate dimensions of the island are 34 kilometres long by 23 kilometres wide (or 21 miles by 14 miles). The highest point, Mount Hillaby, is 340 metres (1,120 feet). The term Madripore has historically been used to refer to fossilised coral, but also Madrepora (*Scleractinia*; ITIS nd.) Reverend Griffith Hughes, FRS (1707-c.1758), was a Welsh-born naturalist appointed rector of St. Lucy's Parish, Barbados in 1736 where he stayed until at least 1748. His ten-book *Natural History of Barbados* was published in 1750 and contains rich descriptions of the flora of the island (Hughes 1750, see RCT, Undated, for colour plates). Discussions about the publication appear to have taken place when Hughes visited England in 1742. Here he met with 'many of the leading scientists of the day, including Sir Hans Sloane'. The map used in Hughes' work was drawn by Thomas Jefferys (c1719-1771) the geographer to the Prince of Wales, and the plates by the German plant biologist Georg Dionysius Ehret (1708-1770), a renowned botanical artist (RCT).

very fertile when it has the benefit of Rain. but misfortunally
for the inhabitants in some years they have hardly sufficient
to moisten the surface then the lower clafs of inhabitants as well as the
nigroes are in great distrefs for the necefsary exiftance nor
could they exift at all were it not from their fupplies of flour
Indian corn & Rice from North America. for thefe difficults
the prefent generation have to blame their forfathers for totally des-
-troying the natural woods on every part of its furface. little regard
-ing the future fate & ftate of their offspring to enriching themfelves
for the then moment with Cotton & the Sugar Cane except on
the precipitous fides of the Gullys which has bid defiance to the
ax of the Europeans. in few very few parts of the Ifland is an
indigenous Tree to be feen. From the fituation & furface of Barba-
-dos nature bids defiance to act. to compensate for the depredations
comitted on her. It is true feveral Gentlemen with great perfe-
-verance & Industry. have reared clumps of Trees about their
habitations. but unluckily this laudable plan is not fo convers-
-ely prefented as it ought. and all that can be done in this
way will have but little effect. to bring back to this hardnd Rock
the regular Tropical feafons it formerly enjoyed.

all the foil of Barbados is acquillacious with Rain produces
the moft luxuriant vegetation. in fome parts a dark brown
and frequently of a Brick clour. in bottoms & hollows it is
blue & remarkably adhesive when moistend. & after Rain
the Roads are very disagreeable to walk on unlefs on thofe parts

where the Coral Rock entirely forms them. from being a strong argilla it is very fit the Potter. a great many Earth jars & englossed pots /by the French canorie/ for holding water & cooking in are daily made in the Island. besides this common

Commentary: page 2 draws attention to issues around deforestation, soil erosion and water conservation and the affects this has on the islands inhabitants who now having imported food, are literally paying for the problems caused by the early settler and planters. Anderson suggests that the process has been mitigated through the planting of stands of trees. There are observations on the pedology of the island, the term argillaceous means rich in clay and this leads Anderson on to a discussion of the qualities of the clay for potting. The 'earth jars' would be what archaeologists generically refer to as low-fired earthenwares (Hauser and DeCorse 2003) and 'englossed' suggests that they are slipped or glazed. It is possible using modern archaeological techniques to identify the source of origins of these clays (Bloch 2019). The word which we have transcribed as 'canorie' must equate to the Barbadian Conaree/Cornaree, an internally glazed lidless earthenware vessel used to store salted meat or pepperpot (Ahlman, Schroedl and McKeown 2009, 33; see also their citation from Edwards and De Verton 2004, 6; Carrington et al 1990, 52; Handler 1963).

Page 3

common soil in severall parts. it is light & sandy formed of the decomposed Madripore. coral & shells. produces cotton -yams. sweet potatoes. cafsava. ginger & arrowroot.

as the interior of the Island is a mass of Coral & of cemented coral. shells & sea sand. covered for the most part with a stratum of Clay soil. it is evident that originally it has been formed at the bottom of the ocean or at least below its surface. this also is clear from its surface as it appears at present. By what agent or power it has been elevated is all conjecture. very probably was by the same convulsion that formed the Leeward Volcanic Islands. Hughes maintains that its rugged surface was from the force of the waters of the Deluge. But if raised by volcanic eruptions or an Earth-quake. the agitation of the sea from tremendous concussion or vibration of its waves which happen on such occasions would have produced the same effect. but without the effects of either it is well known that coral Banks naturally form under the water. similar Gullies or Ravines external as well as internal caves & excavations as we at present see in Barbados. The Bed of the Ocean round the Island to an unknown extent is coral. & Banks or shallows of water at a great distance & from sight of land. as the disposition of Coral Banks is to grow upwards to the surface of the water until their rugged summits appear. thus when near land intangle sea weed & other extraneous matters. brought by Tides & currents. with the risings brought by Torrents of

Commentary: page 3 discusses some of the key crops grown on Barbados, and outlines the geomorphology of the island. Anderson has already noted in page 1 that the island stands apart from the Windward Islands, and the geological circumstances of its formation are different too. Barbados of course is not a volcanic island. He also notes the presence of caves and coral reefs around the shore.

Page 4

of Rain in time form dry land. to this formation Storms and Hurricanes contribute not a little. To these causes Barbados is gradually going in many parts from the Ocean as are all similar made Islands. from these principals it is easy to account for the regular absence on risings of Barbados from high water mark to a considerable distance in land round Barbados as also for the Gullies & caves. the most inland or interior of these Stages or risings in many parts is very high & perpendicular by which there is no entering or penetration into the middle of the Island on almost the West side but by the mouths of the Gullies or openings in them. in these the Roads into the interior enter. These Banks composed of Madripores appear at some distance sea like Castles & other large piles of buildings but on getting on the Summit. of this last stage the country is level covered with a fertile soil. from the number of Sugar Estates elegant buildings with the windmills forms

an elegant perspective as there is no hills or woods to interrupt the breeze it is always cool & pleasant with no interruption to the prospect until lost in the waning Horizon. but in traveling the case is very different for passing from one Estate to another at a small distance nothing in view but a plain covered with canes. buildings & cattle one finds himself on the brink of a precipice about 200 feet deep to pass which he is necessitated to walk many miles until he gets to the termination of it. These Ravines are called gullies in Barbados and greater part of the Island is intersected with them. but they are more numerous & more parallel on to the other from the West side than in every other part of it. These

Commentary: page 4 continues with a broad description of the island and Anderson notes the relative difficulty of traversing it from a west-east direction owing to the broken topography. These gullies historically may have served as refuges for enslaved peoples as well as a clandestine means of moving across the plantation landscape (see Smith and Bassett 2016).

Page 5

These Ravines give to the surface of Barbados different appearance from all the other Islands. many of them go in straight lines some are winding. as before mentioned they commence at the different stages or risings in the Island & terminate in shallow valleys or depressions. the sides are perpendicular formed

of the rugged points of the Coral Rocks & full of excavations the same in bottom some parts of them seem composed of Madripore & different species of coral /properly so called/ semivitrified or into an other. both sides & bottoms are covered with trees and underwood. many of the Trees very large. in few other parts do remain the indigenous plants but in them. when havy torrents of Rain fall the vast accumulation of water in these Gullys is disearged in such quantitys. that it overflows the lower parts of the Island & commits great devastation. The northend of the Island or Parish of S^{ta} Lucia is an intire plan totaly de-vested of these Gullys & little elevated above the level of the sea. The Soil Rich more tending to the blue argilla from the red & of deeper stratum than on most other parts of the Island. it contains a number of fine sugar Estates. it is the most beautifull & fertile parish in the Island. it is separated from the rest of the Island by a high & precipitous range of Rocks. on the N:E part of the Island & adjoining to S^t. Lucia is the Parish of S^t. Andrew more generally known by the name Scotland. It has a very dif-ferent appearance from all other parts & seen as not belonging to them either in structure or composition. It is a hollow nearly surrounded with a high ledge of Rocks of a circular form on the S & West the cliffs are higher those in every other part of the Island & accefs only in one or two places cut thro' the Rocks or the S:E corner & where the coral Rocks terminate

Commentary: page 5 focuses upon the north and north-west of the island, in particular St. Lucy and Scotland District (St. Andrew), noting in the latter the distinctive topography.

Page 6

is a hill of considerable height from the colour called Chalky Mountain. it is entirely formed of white sand in regular strata nearly horizontal. very hard the summit rugged it slopes to the sea but on the West side nearly perpendicular. totally destitute of vegetation but at the base. near the summit of one of the Peaks is a spring of Black bituminous water of a foetid smell & bitter - salt taste. In some parts beautiful efflorescence of alumen. on the North side near the sea are hills formed from strata of a brown sand between these strata about a foot thick are shooting out perpendicularly lamella of Talk and Red & Brown ocre. This lamella forming an angle with the horizon on of about 20'. adjoining to the sea are sand hills evidently formed by the waves. between them & chalky mountain along the shore are high rugged Rocks in many parts appearing as if acted upon by Fire. The component principals sand & small shells. The Valley itself is formed of eminences & small valleys with springs & Rivulets with clumps of the native woods in all parts the surface much broken so that Scotland represents one of the Carribea or Volcanic Islands in miniature. The soil in general is Clay & red or brown it is very fertile. the seasons more regular than in any other part of Barbados. having springs & severall

Rivulets the soil here is never dried or parched as too often happens to the rest of the Island. This is the only part of it I have seen a superficial springs & Rivulets of potable water among its springs severall mineral generally chalybealis near the middle of it. is the noted Tar spring /as it is called/. The Naptha is found floating on the surface of the water & skimmed of like oil morning & evening the water which brings it ifsues from criveces of a Rock. for its reception a bason is dug in the Rock which contains the quantity exsuding in 12 hours. In colour consistence & smell it very much resembles Balsam of Sulphur on the hills from whose declivitys it issues as a strong sulphurous smell. particularly after a shower of Rain in some of them the Bitumen is found in Stratas resembling pot coal & the same

Commentary: page 6 draws attention to the bitumen (Manjak) deposits in the Scotland district (Parnell *et al* 1994). Ligon refers to Mountjack (sic), and most of the sources are found in the east of the island (Burton 2020). Alum(en) is a suphate salt of aluminium and is used in tanning; lamellar is a geological term describing a fine-layered appearance, and Talk (talc), a clay mineral (a 1980 report by Whittingam and Budhooram on minerals in CDCC countries notes clay beds in the St. Andrew parish, and for the properties of Talc see Eurotalc). Chalybeate is a term used to describe water with a high iron oxide content thus rendering the colour red. Naptha is a term historically used to describe a form of crude oil. Balsam of suphur is a mix of suplhur and turpentine.

same as the La Bray of Trinidad. in Barbados it is known by name of Munjack. In what they call Turners hill wood is a sulphureous spring which jets up as I was told severall feet high it some -time days in that state I saw it. I dug some depth into the Earth and found it black & foetid.

From the present appearance of Corner of Barbados some would be led to conjecture that it has been formed partly by a volcanic eruption & partly by the agitation of the ocean what chiefly corroborates this idea. is the large masses of half vitrified Rocks in severall parts as also sulphur being found mixed with the Earth. on some of the hills. In this parts of the Island. the substration on the hills being Tuff or beds of concreted sand. the soil being of an acillaceous nature retaining the water neither admitting of immediate absorption near evaporation swells from the preternatural gravity it acquires. in rainy seasons large tracks slips down the declivity or over the precipices and adds to the soil of a distant property. there have been instances of the whole property of one man soil with all its productions. covering and this without the productions on it being destroyed in the passage.

of Barbados there is another natural diversion on the South -end at the Valley of St^t. Georges which Hughes mention from which it appears. that the track on which St: Anne's Castle rests & the present Garrison forming Needham's point. was originally a small Island

separated from the body of the Island. by a channel in which the sea passed from the windward into Carlisle Bay. this valley at the present time is little elevated above the level of the ocean has been filled by the sediments of the sea from the flux & rising of the waves in so narrow a passage. as well as from the wash of

Commentary: on page 7 Anderson begins by referring to the site of La Brea in Trinidad, the location of a pitch or asphalt lake. Turners Hall Wood, St. Andrew (there may be a misspelling in the original) is best known as a site of great forest biodiversity.

Page 8

from the land on each side

Among the natural curiosities of Barbados may be reckoned the external caves or Gullies. but as they are always in view. like every thing also common little regarded. however an observer of nature will regard them with attention. There is nothing similar to them in any other Island I have seen They are not all in the position as Hughes places them that is running East & West. for the fact is they cut transversely the ledges or risings of the Rocks. but as these Ledges are longer from South to North. than from East to West. consequently they must be more numerous in the direction he says. than South & North. but something singular they are generally parallel whether straight or crooked.

But the most singular Phenomenon in its structure are the numerous internal caves. with which it is perforated in all directions. exclusive of the great number which open on the surface there are many without entry into by external openings this is evident in walking or riding on the Roads some parts of them sound. as from an arched Vault. What is called Coles Cave is the one chiefly taken notice of by the inhabitants as well as strangers. because access into it is more easy than many others. after Hughes description it would be superfluous to say anything of it here.

In that part of the Island called Bermudas some miles N:W from Bridge Town at the bottom of a Ledge of Rocks is the mouth of an Horizontal cave about 200 yards from the opening it communicates with others running in all directions like a subterraneous building containing a number of departments. but for want of light. I was unable to trace them to any considerable distance. This place seems to be little known. I was directed to it by some country people caves & excavations are so numerous in Barbados that its surprising part

Commentary: page 8 adds details about the cave systems of Barbados. Coles Cave St. Thomas is clearly identified. Having studied all the cartographic material relating to Barbados from the 17th and 18th centuries, we can find no identification of

'Bermudas'.⁴ The only topographical feature regularly depicted on maps to the north-west of Bridgetown is Black Rock. In reality the cave could be anywhere along the basal line of the first high cliff. It cannot be a misidentification of Harrisons Cave as that is close to Coles Cave, nor does the location match with sites reported by Lacey *et al* 2013. If we take it that Anderson is not referring to a geographical area of Barbados called 'Bermudas' but is referring to the island generally, and is reinforcing the identification, then we might surmise that he was intending to write 'the island call'd Barbados' but confused it with Bermuda (figure 1).

Position of figure 1: A mysterious toponym

Page 9

part is little else than a crust of Coral Arches. from the same formation there is a place in the parish of St^t Lucia regarded as a curiosity called the Shoot. This is a Cave open to the sea. and at its termination under the Rock it opens on the surface. at some distance from the sea this being a windward coast the waves of the sea rush in and forces the water up through the external opening like a jet d'eau. when the waves are much agitated it sprouts up a great height.

Hughes mentions the Vorticella or animal flower as a great curiosity in Barbados but it is indigenous to most of the other Islands. as well as to it.

⁴ We thank Karl Watson and his colleagues for their suggestions here; the consensus is that the text does read 'Bermudas'.

as to the mineral Kingdom in barbados little can be expected from its formation. but the products of the ocean Hughes speaks of gold ore having been found in it but that must have been a mistake if so. it must have been imported from some other part of the world. Pyrites containg Iron may have been found in it. & may still be seen there but silver & and gold is not the produce of Coral Rocks near of hills of sea sand. From the uniformity of surface & soil there could not have been a very great variety of plants originaly in Barbados. what they they call the Dunk Tree /Rhamnus jujuba/ is indigenous to it and not to any of the other Islands.

The only animal not found in the Windward Islands is the monkey. so numerous are they now in the gullys that they are the greatest plague the planters have. making dreadfull havock in their ground provisions as well as in the cane fields. however it is more than probable. the present generation of these animals are spring. from a male & female tamed or kept as a curiosity making their escape after the Island was in a state of cultivation as

Commentary: page 9 continues the discussion of caves. It is probable here that he is referring to the blow hole at the Spout, Ladder Bay. There is no such plant as an animal flower; it is used to refer to an animal that looks like a plant such as a sea anemone, and indeed in Animal Flower Cave in St Lucy one can see a large number of sea anenomes; notably Hughes wrote about this animal flower, a Zoophyton according to Hughes, in 1743 (Hughes 1743). According to the Kew Plants of the

World Online database, *Rhamnus jujuba* (today *Rhamnus jujuba* L.) is a synonym for *Ziziphus mauritiana* var. *mauritiana*. The tree is native to west Africa and Sahelian Africa (including Mauritania), as well as Afghanistan, Iran, India, parts of China, Sri Lanka, and Thailand. It was introduced into the Caribbean and northern South America. A thorny evergreen it is commonly known as Indian jujube, Chinese Apple, Ber, and Dunks. According to the Useful Tropical Plants online database, its 'fruit is eaten raw or preserved and has a sour to sweet flavour', whilst young leaves can be cooked as a vegetable. The plant has numerous uses including for herbal remedies (see TPD). The monkeys Anderson refers to are African Green Monkeys (*Chlorocebus sabaues*). They were introduced from West Africa during the period of slavery.

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as we cannot conceive them as indigenous to the Island
for in a state of nature. its woods never produced those trees yield
-ing the fruit. nuts & seeds the animal exists on in its nature
Forests. in that respect. the other mountainous & larger Islands
would have been more conjenial to them – at present their exis
-tance in Barbados intently rests on depredations from the planters -
This Island is more favourable to the European constitution
than most of the others altho' the Town is disagreeably hot
from its low situation & crooked streets. The white stone buildings
crowded too closely together. with the white sand on the streets
contributes very much to the heat. however most parts of the
country enjoy an uninterrupted cool breeze. untainted with the

Effluvia from Swamps or Lagoons. the inhabitants are healthy & and many of them arrive to old age. notwithstanding in some seasons. particularly after they have had a rainy season. the Island is unhealthy. Besides the common Tropical diseases The white inhabitants are subjugated to two others. the glandular disease or swell'd Legs and Leprosy and a Third is prevalent among the Blacks the Elephantiasis. all three are incurable. The two last have made their appearance of late years in Antigua & some other of the Leeward Islands. The dry belly ach is more prevalent in Barbados than in the other Islands.

The Glandular disease or as they call it in Barbados the Fever. but in the other Islands swell'd Legs. is a singular affection of the human form is more prevalent in & near Bridgetown than in any other part of the Island. as to the predisposing cause medical men seem to be in the dark as Yet. but the greater number impute it to the water. as to this disease as well as some others common to the Tropical climate. Physicians pay to little attention to

Commentary: page 10 touches upon a rather unfavourable description of Bridgetown as well as an outline of three main tropical diseases. The Glandular Disease, known in Barbados simply as 'Fever' and in other islands as 'Swell'd Legs' is not easily identifiable (however, the author might note that Anderson might have been describing elephantiasis). Handler's 2008 survey (2008, 612) suggests that cases generically known as 'Fever' were typhoid or paratyphoid. This of course does

not result in the swelling of legs. Dropsy however, was a disease where legs swelled. A symptom of cardiac failure, and/or malnutrition, dropsy (edema) was common in the tropics, and a fever often accompanied it (Horton 1875, 16). However, Anderson knew the symptoms of dropsy as the disease dropsy so his describing the symptoms only suggests this glandular disease was not dropsy. The dry belly ache was also known as 'nervous colic' and produced a 'violent Pain in the Bowels' and had symptoms like gout (Childs 1970, 213). Richard Towne, a physician in Barbados, had first noted it as a frequent disease in a 1726 treatise, with Hillary 'attributed [it] to atmospheric conditions (Childs 1970, 216); Anderson does likewise.

The history of leprosy is well known in Barbados. Prior to the construction of the deep water harbour, Pelican Island served as a sanatorium for infectious disease and the current National archive building represents the last remains of the once extensive Lazaretto complex (Barbados Department of Archives 2006). Elephantiasis results in the enlargement of limbs and is caused by parasitic worms. As Handler (2008, 614) notes, the term 'Barbados Leg' was widely used in the Caribbean to describe this disease (see also Laurence 1989). William Hillary in his 1766 treatise on epidemical diseases in Barbados, dedicated a chapter to it. Barbadians referred to it as Guyana leg. It appears therefore, that Anderson may have been confused in his description of the first 'glandular disease'. We suggest it makes sense, based upon Handler's exhaustive account, that the three main diseases that Anderson describes are Typhoid, Leprosy, and Elephantiasis.

state of the atmosphere where the diseases prevail. If this was the case we should not hear so much of the introduction of Bulam & Siam Fever into the West Indies. nor see so many contradictory volumes from Hypothetical Data. how far the nature of the soil & composition of the atmosphere over it aids in producing disease. I leave to the Physicians of Barbados to ascertain who are better acquainted with them & more able to solve the question than I. however it may not be foreign to the subject to observe. that Bridge-Town is built on a Bed of white sand which has been accumulated by the surf of the sea. & must imbibe the water like a sponge from the intense heat during the daytime. a quantity of saline particles must arise in Evaporation. as soon as the sun disappears at night. from condensation great part of them must again descend. In this part of the Island during the dry season the dew falls in such a quantity. that in the morning the grass is as wet as if rain had fallen during the night. this at seasons of year we have little or no dew in the other Islands. this fact is so well known to the natives. that umbrellas after sunset are more used than at noon day. another circumstance that is observed by people from the other Islands that heat of Bridge Town is more taxing than they experience in other Islands hence the pores of the body more opened & more susceptible to imbibe the damp & dew of the Evenings. nor can there be any doubt but from the porosity of the Coral bed of Barbados that its atmosphere is more loaded with saline particles. than it is

over the other Islands.

That the water is not the only cause of this remarkable complaint is evident. that those are affected with it. that seldom or

Commentary: page 11 makes further reference to the influence of climate upon disease in general and very specifically the role of water, which ought to suggest an identification of the 'fever' with typhoid. Bulam Fever is Yellow Fever, and Hillary writes about this in depth. Siam Fever was known as black vomit fever or maladie de Siam, and was haemorrhagic (Geggus 1979, 41). Father Labat, the French Dominican missionary and writer describes suffers' flesh becoming 'as black and putrid in a quarter of an hour after death, as if they had been dead four or five days' (in Bancroft 1811, 321-22). Labat notes he caught Siam Fever twice; the first time he vomited blood and had a fever for four days, the second lasted 'six or seven days' (in Bancroft 1811, 322).

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or ever drunk it without being pretty well corrected with a large proportion of ardent spirit or Wine. after sometime Europeans are as subject to it as the natives & somewhat singular that Brute creation is not exempted from it.

Its first commencement is with Intermittent Fever. The Legs & Scrotum are the parts. it generally attacks. which gradually enlarge to an enormous size untill at last the unhappy victim is incapable of motion or exercise –

Commentary: page 12 continues with the disease theme exploring one that swells a man's legs and scrotum. Writings on diseases of the testis from the early eighteenth-century note a range of conditions where the scrotum swells but does not mention swollen legs (see Cooper 1830). A possibility might be varicoele, which Cooper called orchidoptosis (Marte 2018); fever and malaise are known symptoms of this condition which can be caused by viral or bacterial infections, including via sexual transmission (Mayo Clinic 1998-2004). A swollen scrotum is often a sign of venereal disease (Weisser 2017, Gallagher 2018) however, Anderson attributed the symptoms to atmospheric conditions not immoral behaviour, and was well aware of STIs of the time. Anderson noted diseases and their vernacular cures in a couple of his manuscripts. In his 1791 manuscript held in the archives of Kew Botanical Gardens, (For 1-4) he includes stomach and intestine complaints, ague, dropsy, ring worm, fever, rashes, thrush, ulcer, sores wounds, venereal complaints, and Yaws as common ailments treated by medicinal plants; more appear in his c.1800 manuscript (LinnSoc Anderson). As such, it is unlikely the scrotum-swelling water-related disease is venereal.

It must be noted that the concept of Galenic (Greek) humorism was normative at this time and as such a damp (moist) and hot atmosphere was regularly connected to conditions such as cystitis (see Bikta & Glynn 2017), issues to do with the bladder and the regions of the body around the lower torso and genitals. In Anderson we can see the common notion of a wet atmosphere determining his thoughts on the cause of edema; notably Sloane also believed it was the damp climate that brought about disease (Johnston 2016, 70). However, physicians such as Hillary, whilst attributing

some diseases to the effects of a tropical climate, was aware that others such as elephantiasis was not geographically located but historically situated in human action, notably the importation of people from West Africa (Seth 2018, 61, see also McNeil 2022).

Conclusion

Overall, Anderson's Barbados manuscript provides an interesting perspective on this island at the end of the long eighteenth-century, by a man unfamiliar with it. The Linnean Society suggests the manuscript dates to 1809, but Anderson's letters to Forsyth indicate it may be based on his thoughts when he visited in 1783. It is clear he was unimpressed with the island, although this might be due to the deforestation brought about by the industrial production of sugar cane; (see page 2 of his manuscript). As a botanist, the loss of flora and fauna he knew was disastrous, and whilst the term climate change post-dates him by over two centuries (UKRI, Undated), several of his writings directly attribute changes in rainfall patterns to plantation deforestation. In this manuscript he also ties the increased costs of living (the importation of food) to sugar monoculture; a form of agriculture he was totally opposed to.

There is perhaps little, or maybe even no, new information in this manuscript that adds to contemporary knowledge about late eighteenth-century Barbados. But it, we believe, is an interesting account, and does add to knowledge about Anderson; in time, we hope this will grow and Anderson be given the academic attention we believe he deserves. It also provides an opportunity for people unfamiliar with late

eighteenth-century handwriting to explore a relatively short original manuscript,⁵ against a transcription, and by providing a brief essay and commentary, understand the wider context of the writer and his work.

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⁵ See LinnSoc MS/610 <https://linnean-online.org/170749/#?s=0&cv=0>

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