

**Searching for a Slave Cemetery in Barbados, West Indies:
A Bioarchaeological and Ethnohistorical Investigation**

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A Bioarchaeological and Ethnohistorical Investigation

by

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with Michael D. Conner and Keith P. Jacobi

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Research Paper No. 59

June 1989

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1989

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Printed in the United States of America

ISBN: 0-88104-071-1

Library of Congress Catalog Card Number: 89-62149



THE PRIME MINISTER'S OFFICE

BRIDGETOWN, BARBADOS

TEL: 809-426-3179

Professor Jerome Handler of Southern Illinois University has been carrying out valuable archaeological and historical research in Barbados over the past twenty-five years and has reached the stage at which a more extensive program is being undertaken which I am satisfied will increase our knowledge of the Barbadian heritage.

I feel that Dr. Handler should be given every encouragement in his research activities.

Errol Barrow

Errol W. Barrow
Prime Minister

Jan 1987

Contents

Figures	ix
Plates	xi
Tables	xiii
Preface	xv
Acknowledgments	xvii
1. Introduction: Ethnohistory, Archaeology, and Bioanthropology in the Study of Barbados Slaves	1
2. Objectives of the 1987 Fieldwork	9
3. Cemeteries during the Slave Period: Whites, Slaves, and the Newton Cemetery	13
4. Plantation Fields: Naming Practices, and the Negro Yard and Graveyard Fields	17
5. Searching for Cemeteries Before the 1987 Season	21
6. Plantation Research in 1987: Ethnographic and Historical	27
7. Plantation Research in 1987: Archaeological	51
8. Conclusions	79
Appendix A. Cholera Burial Grounds	85
Appendix B. Excavation of Human Skeletal Remains in Barbados	87
Appendix C. Regulations Surrounding Archaeological Research in Barbados	91
Appendix D. Tabulations of Excavated and Surface Collected Materials, by Rebecca House	93
Notes	103
References	107
Plates	119

Figures

1.	Barbados: plantation research areas	25
2.	Guinea, 1987: fields and archaeological research areas	28
3.	Guinea, 1857 and 1987: field divisions and field names	29
4.	Malvern, 1987: fields and archaeological research areas	34
5.	Hanson, 1987: fields and archaeological research areas	37
6.	St. Nicholas, 1987: fields and archaeological research areas	41
7.	Bissex-Parks, 1987: research areas and excavation units	46
8.	Guinea, 1987: topography and fields	57
9.	Malvern: excavation units in Rock field	59
10.	Malvern, 1987: topography and fields	60
11.	Hanson, 1987: topography and fields	64
12.	Hanson: excavation units in stable area	65
13.	Hanson: excavation units in Negro Yard pasture area	67
14.	St. Nicholas, 1987: topography and fields	70
15.	St. Nicholas: excavation units in Ben Jones field pasture area	73

Plates

1. Newton cemetery, 1972. Facing northeast; main burial area is along the slope bottom, in lower right. The trees no longer existed in 1987.
2. Churchyard burial vault of white family.
3. Guinea pasture area. Facing approximately west by north. Gully area with dense vegetation and coconut trees along center; Negro Yard field is just behind, in center right, and the southern tip of the Mill Yard is in the extreme right center.
4. Malvern: Graveyard and Rock fields. Taken from South Negro Yard field and facing approximately southeast. Rock field in foreground, Graveyard field behind it, with the plantation house and Mill Yard on the left, by the road.
5. Malvern: test square in Rock field. This shows a typical exposure of limestone bedrock in a square.
6. Hanson: front of stable. Facing Mill Yard on the east.
7. Hanson: excavation area behind stable in New field.
8. St. Nicholas plantation house.
9. St. Nicholas: pasture by Ben Jones field. Facing north east. Mill Yard and plantation house are in the right background, behind the line of tall trees.
10. Bissex-Parks: shovel testing in the swale area of Graveyard field; facing approximately northwest, with valleys of the Scotland District in the background.

Tables

1.	Material Surface Collected at Guinea	56
2.	Material Collected at Malvern	61
3.	Material Surface Collected at Hanson	63
4.	Material from Test Squares Near Hanson Stable	66
5.	Material from Test Squares in Pasture North of Hanson Upper Negro Yard Field	69
6.	Material Collected at St. Nicholas	72
7.	Material Collected from Graveyard Field at Bissex-Parks	74

Preface

This report describes the results of a ten-week bioarchaeological project, also involving archival and ethnographic research, on the Caribbean island of Barbados. Fieldwork during the summer of 1987 was primarily supported by the National Geographic Society, with additional funding from the Wenner-Gren Foundation for Anthropological Research. The major objectives of the fieldwork were to locate sugar plantation slave cemetery sites from which skeletal and artifactual remains could be recovered. Archaeological survey and testing focused on five plantations with histories extending deep into the slave period, and where strong oral and written evidence existed for slave cemeteries. This research, however, failed to discover traces of any cemetery or recover any contextual evidence of human remains.

The following pages discuss the background to the research project, how and why the five plantations were selected, and detail the archaeological work conducted at these plantations. Also incorporated are the findings of the historical/archival and ethnographic research relating to the plantations. In addition, we attempt to account for the failure to locate burial sites and suggest possible avenues for future archaeological inquiry. Finally, we consider some more general historical and anthropological issues regarding unmarked Caribbean slave cemeteries, the problems of locating them, and how, in areas that have experienced intensive cultivation for many years, they offer unique undisturbed archaeological contexts for investigating slavery and the culture of early slave populations.

The failure to locate evidence of even one cemetery was quite disappointing and mystifying during fieldwork, but the very failure to find the expected raises a variety of questions relating to archaeological methodology and the nature of slave cemeteries and burials themselves. Even with its negative archaeological findings, we believe the 1987 research can make a contribution to the study of Barbados' plantation history as well as to historical archaeology in the Caribbean and its

application to the study of slavery. Because this project is unique in Caribbean historical archaeology, we have kept in mind the writing of this report the possibility that it can serve as a guide for other researchers who would attempt similar work in Barbados or other plantation areas of the Caribbean.

The field period lasted from May 24 until August 4, when the last members of the field crew returned to the United States. During the first week the Project Director/Senior Author renewed personal contacts in private and governmental sectors of Barbados and dealt with a variety of logistical issues. The field crew arrived on May 30, and spent the first few days in a general orientation to Barbados (including brief visits to some of the plantations where work was planned) and acquiring supplies and tools needed for the field and the laboratory. Actual fieldwork on the first plantation began on June 3. The Project Director left Barbados on July 5, but other members of the group continued the archaeological research until the last week of July, when operations began winding down and preparations were made for departure.

During the summer, three types of research activities took place. The most important, of course, was the archaeological work on the five plantations. This research, discussed in detail in chapter 7, involved surface surveys of plantation lands, shovel testing, and the excavation of test units. While the archaeological research was proceeding, the Project Director conducted ethnographic and historical research on those plantations under archaeological investigation.

The ethnographic research essentially consisted of efforts to discover, and interview, older informants, usually retired or present plantation workers or managers, who could provide information on the plantation's history, particularly any oral traditions that might suggest the location of human skeletal remains or burial grounds. Interviews were generally informal. They attempted to ascertain if anyone had ever seen or heard of evidence of human bone or burial grounds, the names of

plantation fields, and, in general, any oral information that could shed light on the plantation's history of ownership and land use—information that might be connected with information of greater age that could be gleaned from historical research.

Historical research was primarily conducted in the Barbados Department of Archives, and utilized manuscript sources, supplemented by published primary and secondary ones. This research was devoted to collecting any available information on the five plantations so as to develop an historical sketch of each plantation, particularly its ownership, acreage, and demographic attributes of its slave population. In addition, archival research tried to establish the nature and extent of existing historical source materials in Barbados

that would be useful for future and more comprehensive research on plantation histories. Crucial to the project's overall research strategy was the accumulation of historical data on the plantations that could complement the information derived from archaeological research. The goal of obtaining further historical information on various plantations would have been more closely pursued had evidence been uncovered of a cemetery. However, despite the limitations of time and available manuscript and other historical resources, sufficient information was gleaned in the field (as well as from later library research elsewhere and research at the Public Record Office, London) to provide preliminary sketches and make some contribution to Barbados' early plantation history.

Acknowledgments

A number of people assisted in one way or another in the research project reported in this monograph. Robert S. Corruccini, the senior author's principal collaborator for several years, played a major role in developing the bioanthropological component of the research design, and in stimulating a variety of questions and hypotheses relating to biohistorical issues; had the project discovered skeletal materials, Corruccini would have been primarily responsible for their analysis. Lynne Peters Sullivan developed the original archaeological field strategies, and would have directed the fieldwork if other professional commitments had not intervened. Arthur C. Aufderheide also contributed to the original research design, and Elizabeth Brandon Ritter assisted in preparing grant applications to funding agencies. The senior author is particularly indebted to Frederick W. Lange, whose collaboration in the early 1970s was instrumental in providing the framework within which the present archaeological project was conducted.

The 1987 fieldwork in Barbados was greatly facilitated by the congeniality and cooperation of many Barbadians from all walks of life. To name all who helped us in one way or another would produce a very extensive list. Yet, mention must be made of some individuals to whom we are most grateful. Ronald Hughes, a Barbadian historian with superior knowledge of the island's early plantation history, willingly shared the results of his own researches, and occasionally assisted with our archival research; he also was a frequent source of moral support and practical advice. We also are obliged to Christine Matthews, Director of the Barbados Department of Archives, and to David Williams, Assistant Archivist, for their unstinting assistance and patient cooperation with the many demands placed on their time and resources.

Clearly no research could have proceeded without the full cooperation of the owners, or their agents, of the sugar plantations on which we worked. We owe special thanks to C. R. Bellamy, Oliver Browne, Stephen Cave, Keith Deane, and Lionel Warde. Other persons associated with sugar plantations who helped

the research include: Patrick Allen, Morgan Boyce, Lionel Corbin, Charles Gill, Grafton Hutchinson, Richard Johnson, Richard and Gladys Kirton, Henry Miller, Robin Payne, Neville Proverbs, Archibald Robertson, Bobby Watson, Victor Welch, and Graham Yearwood.

Others in Barbados who extended friendship and hospitality, or offered practical advice and encouragement, include the Governor-General, His Excellency Sir Hugh Springer and Lady Springer, and the late Prime Minister, the Honorable Errol W. Barrow. In addition, Jean and Suzanne Baulu, Peter Campbell, Trevor Carmichael, Adrian and Claudette Clarke, Michael Clarke, Peter Evalyn, Henry Fraser, Seon Goodridge, Charles and Grace Pilgrim, Alfred Pragnell, Bernard St. John, Jason Springer, Mark Springer, Jill Sheppard, John Wickham, and Donald Wiles.

The Center for Archaeological Investigations at Southern Illinois University has been supportive of our research, and we particularly thank the Center's Director, George Gumerman, as well as Kim Smiley and Pat Harris, the Curator and Office Manager, respectively, and Patrice Teltser, Director of Publications. Rebecca House, formerly the Center's Assistant Curator, tabulated the artifacts shipped from Barbados to Southern Illinois University. Thomas Gatlin assembled the cover. Karen Schmidt, Southern Illinois University Research Photography and Illustration Facility, prepared the maps, and Cynthia Clabough, of the same office, designed the text.

Assistance on various historical and archaeological issues was given by Douglas Armstrong, Timothy Earle, Roderick Ebanks, Conrad Goodwin, George Gumerman, Barry Higman, Donald Jones, and David Watters. The senior author is also thankful to Charles Blitzer and Kent Mullikin, former Director and Assistant Director, respectively, of the National Humanities Center; they extended to him, as a former fellow, the hospitality of the Center for three weeks during the winter of 1987-1988. Portions of this report were drafted in the Center's congenial atmosphere, abetted in

no small measure by the presence of Boomer Greene.

The field crew during the summer of 1987 consisted of eight persons. Jerome Handler, PhD. (Professor of Anthropology, Southern Illinois University), the Project Director, a sociocultural anthropologist, was in charge of general logistical and public relations matters. His primary research function was ethnographic and historical research relating to the plantations where archaeological work was conducted. Michael Conner (PhD. University of Chicago; currently a research archaeologist with the Kampsville Archaeological Center Contract Program, Kampsville, Illinois), a bioarchaeologist, was the Field Director. He was responsible for devising archaeological research strategies and directing the survey and test excavations on the plantations; he is also Senior Author of chapter 7 of this report, compiled Tables 1-7, and contributed to various Figures. Other members of the group, with varying degrees of

archaeological field experience, included: Elizabeth Brandon Ritter (M.A., Southern Illinois University) and Guy Weaver (M.A., Memphis State University), both PhD. students, in bioanthropology and archaeology respectively, in the Department of Anthropology at Southern Illinois University; Keith Jacobi (M.A., Southern Illinois University), currently a PhD. student in bioanthropology at Indiana University; and Suzannah England (M.Phil., Archaeology, University of Cambridge), a West Indian citizen of St. Lucia. Recruited in Barbados were Simon Clarke and Andrew Pilgrim, both law students at the University of the West Indies (Cave Hill campus, Barbados), with no previous archaeological field experience.

Publication was largely made possible through funds provided by the College of Liberal Arts and the Office of Research Development and Administration at Southern Illinois University.

Chapter 1 Introduction: Ethnohistory, Archaeology, and Bioanthropology in the Study of Barbados Slaves

The Barbados Slave Ethnohistorical Project

As initially conceived, the 1987 fieldwork continued the Project Director's long-term investigation of plantation slave life in Barbados. Although focusing on Barbados slaves, this investigation also is concerned with how this population can shed light on wider issues: the retention, modification, and loss of African cultural traditions among New World slaves, the processes by which African-American cultures developed during the period of slavery, and the biohistory of enslaved Africans and their descendants. Over the years the project has employed historical, ethnographic, archaeological, and bioanthropological data to explore a variety of issues relating to the African heritage in the Caribbean, and has involved two principal collaborators: Robert S. Corruccini, a bioanthropologist, and Frederick W. Lange, an archaeologist. This collaboration among anthropologists from several subfields has resulted in an integration of archaeological and bioanthropological data with historical and ethnographic research. An issue of central concern to the Project Director's interests is how multidisciplinary anthropological and historical approaches can be applied to the study of historic period so-called "inarticulate" populations -- New World black slaves being only one such group (Lemisch 1969).

In its widest scholarly context, the Barbados slave research fits into the multidisciplinary field known as Afro-American Studies. Although this field has long been established as a legitimate area of scholarly inquiry (see, for example, Wood 1978), interest in the sociocultural history of New World blacks proliferated in the 1960s, and today continues to attract historians and historically oriented social scientists, including anthropologists from several subfields and topical specialties. Afro-American research in anthropology (whose intellectual father was Melville Herskovits) has traditionally

devoted substantial effort to the influence of Africa on specific forms of contemporary cultural behavior, and to the study of continuities or changes in African cultural traditions in the New World. Conventionally applying ethnographic and historical approaches, this research has examined how Africans and their descendants perpetuated, modified, or lost aspects of their African cultural heritages in New World environments characterized by plantation economies, colonialism, and chattel slavery (e.g., Herskovits 1941, 1966; Mintz and Price 1976; Smith 1955).

The Caribbean has afforded an excellent setting for anthropologists and other scholars to explore questions related to contemporary African-American sociocultural patterns and the historical processes by which these patterns were created and developed. A great deal of this research has focused on contemporary cultures or aspects of these cultures purported to reflect African influences. Until the last 15 years or so there has been little intensive research on the slave cultures that formed the cultural intermediary between Africa and the present. Consequently, Afro-Americanists often have been hindered in their inquiries into culture change and acculturation, major objectives of their research, and have speculated, often using inadequate information, about the roots of Caribbean cultures. Slavery is a focal interest in discussions of these roots and is particularly significant for understanding modern Caribbean cultures.

A full understanding of the processes of culture change generally has been impeded by the scarcity of intensive diachronic studies of slave sociocultural life that extend into the earliest periods of New World slavery and cover a relatively long period of time. Moreover, despite great strides throughout the late 1960s, 1970s, and 1980s in understanding the life of slaves, it is still generally true for the

Caribbean that a great deal more is known about the institutional aspects of the slave society than about the slaves themselves, especially in the earlier periods; and for the United States, research efforts have tended to focus on the nineteenth century, while the colonial period has only recently begun to attract serious and systematic scholarly attention.

In an effort to document "a past not only obscure, but obscured" (Mintz 1975: 494) and to understand more generally the processes by which African-American cultures developed from their earliest beginnings, the Project Director initiated a research program in 1965 that was designed to produce an intensive and holistic picture of the life of Barbados' slaves, particularly plantation workers. This research was intended to recapture, in as much detail as possible, the physical condition of slaves and their sociocultural life, and to chart changes in their life over time. To achieve maximum insight into developmental processes and culture change, the research was designed to treat the entire slave period, some 200 years, from early colonization in the 1620s to 1834, when slavery ended throughout the British Empire.

Barbados, one of England's oldest New World colonies, is a convenient natural laboratory for exploring issues in early African-American history. It was chosen as the research focus for several reasons. For one, the island's history is that of a classic or "model" New World slave society. Colonized in 1627, Barbados' early export economy mainly depended on the relatively small-scale cultivation of tobacco and cotton, largely produced by free and indentured whites. By the 1640s, however, sugar was being grown on a commercial scale thereby stimulating the development of plantations as the major production units and the dependence on Africa as the major source of labor. Barbados was the first territory in England's overseas empire to develop large-scale sugar cane cultivation under a plantation system dependent on African slave labor. By the 1650s the island was already a developed plantation-slave society. Throughout the last half of the seventeenth century and into the early eighteenth it was England's wealthiest and most populous colony in the Americas. During the 1670s Barbados reached the zenith of its prosperity, and its

black population of about 32,800 far exceeded that of any other New World English territory; it was almost double the combined total of blacks in England's five other Caribbean colonies and close to six times the total of blacks in all of England's mainland colonies combined (Handler and Pohlmann 1984: 391). Although Barbados' prominence in England's sugar empire was preempted by Jamaica during the third decade or so of the eighteenth century, the island continued to be dominated by the slave production of sugar under the plantation system -- and it remained a quintessential plantation-slave society until emancipation in 1834.

A second reason why Barbados was chosen for research derives from its historical importance as a sugar colony and slave society: this importance has yielded an abundance of written source materials, both manuscript and published (Handler 1971, 1989). A third reason is that Barbados was under continuous British control, never having been invaded by another European power, from 1627 to its political independence in 1966. For a Commonwealth or English-speaking Caribbean country, this is a fairly unusual colonial history, and it permits control of an important cultural and historical variable. Finally, prior to starting his slave project, the Project Director had conducted close to 15 months of social anthropological field research in Barbados (1960; 1961-1962) for his doctoral dissertation (Handler 1964). This research focused on contemporary socioeconomic and ecological issues in a village whose population was largely descended from African slaves, but it provided a substantive ethnographic perspective from which to view and interpret issues in the island's sociocultural history. Moreover, the village has been visited regularly and repeatedly over the years, and villagers have continued to provide ethnographic data bearing on some of the ethnohistorical issues addressed in the wider slave project.

When the slave project was initiated, the Project Director's research concentrated on data collection from written (printed and manuscript) sources in a wide variety of libraries and archival repositories in Britain, Scotland, Ireland, the United States, Jamaica, and Barbados. Throughout the years-- and up to the present-- archival and library research has

continued to be a vital dimension of the research, and has arguably generated the most data on the life of slaves and the society in which they lived. In addition, intermittent ethnographic fieldwork since the mid-1960s has involved interviews with elderly Barbadians. These interviews have attempted to gather data on a variety of topics ranging from mortuary practices and beliefs surrounding death to folk medicine and magico-religious beliefs in general; efforts also have been made to elicit contemporary perceptions of slavery that might illuminate various details of the slave period uncovered through historical or archaeological research.

Archaeological Research at Newton Plantation

Traditional research on New World slave life has depended largely on documentary and, to some extent, on oral sources. Although in more recent periods slave research in the United States and in the Caribbean has increasingly emphasized the social and cultural life of slaves (e.g., Blassingame 1979; Brathwaite 1971; Craton 1978; Dirks 1986; Gaspar 1985; Genovese 1974; Higman 1984; Joyner 1984; Kulikoff 1986; Patterson 1967; Price 1979; Wood 1974), in contrast to older historical studies which tended to focus on the institutional dimensions of the slave society, this research has still fundamentally rested on documentary sources.

To a much lesser degree than more conventional sources of historical data, but with increasing frequency over the past 10 or 15 years, archaeological research has been applied to the investigation of African-American cultures and New World slavery, primarily in plantation sites (e.g., Adams 1987; Adams and Boling 1989; Armstrong 1989; Fairbanks 1984; Kelso 1984; Klingelhofer 1987; Orser 1984, 1988; Otto 1981, 1984; Singleton 1985, 1986). During the early 1970s, when the archaeological research began in Barbados, archaeology had been employed only minimally in the United States (Ascher and Fairbanks 1971; Fairbanks 1974) and barely had been utilized in Caribbean slave research (some minor work had taken place in Cuba [Academia de Ciencias de Cuba 1970]). Although archaeological investigations of slavery in the Caribbean are still in their relative infancy, and very few major ones have

In addition to historical and ethnographic research, six months of archaeological fieldwork (funded by the National Science Foundation and Wenner-Gren Foundation for Anthropological Research) took place over two seasons in late 1971 and early 1972, and in 1973. This work involved excavations and surface collecting at 14 different sugar plantations. Ultimately, the archaeological research concentrated on Newton plantation, and particularly its slave cemetery (Handler and Lange 1978, 1979). It was the work at Newton and, at the time, its unforeseen long-range results that ultimately led to the bioarchaeological project which is the focus of this report.

been (or are currently being) conducted in Barbados, Jamaica, and Montserrat (Armstrong 1989; Handler and Lange 1978; Howson 1987; Pulsipher and Goodwin 1982; on a smaller scale, cf. Gerace 1986; Higman 1974; Righter 1984; Watters 1987), such studies have shown how an archaeological approach, when combined with historical research, can provide useful data and perspectives on slavery, the sociocultural life of slaves, and the plantation system.

The Barbados archaeological project in the early 1970s was designed to yield specific information on plantation slave life that was not available or barely mentioned in written sources, and to provide a more objective check and another perspective on the ethnocentric and racist biases of these sources. It also was hoped that archaeology would provide a new diachronic perspective to enhance exploration of issues in culture change. A basic feature of the research strategy was to ultimately combine the results of the archaeological research with historical information in order to provide a more complete picture of plantation slavery in Barbados.

The original intention was to excavate in plantation slave village sites and to recover information on such cultural topics as settlement patterns, house construction, size and spatial relationships, household furniture and utensils and culinary practices. It was also planned to excavate in burial areas to acquire data on mortuary practices that would yield insights

into the slaves' religious beliefs, conceptions of the afterlife, and changes in these ideological patterns over time.

In brief, archaeological research at slave village sites proved to be relatively unproductive and little evidence of slave domestic and community life was found (cf. Ferguson 1979). Some possible reasons for this relate to the effects of a tropical environment on a basically organic material culture; extensive cultivation, deep plowing, and various modern cultural alterations which left few undisturbed areas, and profoundly affected-- if not erased-- many cultural features associated with slave life; and the slaves were probably even far poorer materially than was assumed before the research commenced (Handler and Lange 1978: 43-57).

Ultimately, the archaeological and historical research focused on Newton plantation, particularly on what turned out to be its slave cemetery. Unlike the research at various former village sites on other plantations, work at Newton's cemetery was highly productive in its yield of cultural and biological materials.

Newton was originally chosen for investigation because there was an extensive manuscript collection bearing on its early history (Handler 1976). Analysis of the Newton historical materials, and those on Barbados sugar plantations more generally, established that during the slave period Newton and its slave population typified medium to large-scale Barbados sugar plantations in all major physical, agricultural, social, labor organizational, and demographic characteristics (Handler and Lange 1978: 58-60; 65-101).

Although part of the slave village site at Newton was investigated archaeologically, this investigation yielded little information-- consistent with the results from other plantations. However, most of the time at Newton involved excavating the slave cemetery. In the end, almost two months were spent at Newton in January and February 1972, and an additional six weeks of research took place at the cemetery in April and May 1973.

Very shortly after the archaeological research began at Newton, interviews turned up clues to the possible existence of a slave cemetery. A former plantation manager, who had managed Newton for about 32 years, related that a few decades before his retirement in 1964 a number of burials had been discovered in an uncultivated grassland or pasture area when holes were dug for the planting of casuarina trees (Plate 1); one burial had been actually dug into. Although the bones were decayed, two coffin handles and a few metal ("brass") buttons were found. And a retired worker, in his late seventies or early eighties, reported that, as a child, his grandparents had told him that the "old people" were interred in this pasture; he pointed to several spots in the field, apparent mounds, which he claimed were the "vaults" containing these burials.

During the first day of excavations at one of the major mounds (actually the third day of test excavations in the pasture) human bone was uncovered barely 2 cm from the surface, in a trench laid out across the mound. Subsequent testing and excavations in other areas of the pasture turned up more bone. Ultimately it was shown that this was, indeed, a slave cemetery (Handler and Lange 1978: 104-108; Lange 1972). (It is only with the benefit of hindsight, writing from the perspective of the present, that we can fully appreciate the luck surrounding the discovery of Newton's cemetery and the relative ease with which its presence was archaeologically validated. The difficulty of finding slave cemeteries became increasingly apparent during the 1980s, when the Project Director attempted to find them through interviews and historical research [see chapter 5]; however, the full implications of the role played by luck in the early 1970s was not entirely realized until 1987 when the current archaeological project failed to locate any burial sites.)

As of this writing, Newton's cemetery is still the major undisturbed slave cemetery to have been excavated in the non-Hispanic Caribbean. Excavations yielded the remains of 104 individuals interred from about 1660 to 1820. This skeletal sample remains the largest and earliest group of African and African-descended slaves yet excavated from archaeological contexts in the Caribbean or North America.

(Ninety-two individuals were initially reported by Handler and Lange [1978], but this figure was revised upward by subsequent laboratory analyses of the skeletal remains.)

The Newton cemetery excavations proved to be highly productive in terms of specific data on such topics as slave mortuary practices and socioreligious beliefs, material

Bioanthropological Analyses of the Newton Skeletal Materials

Until very recently, the biological and medical history of New World blacks has been largely addressed by historians (and a few historically oriented sociocultural anthropologists) who have relied on narrative literary evidence and, particularly in recent years, large-scale quantitative samples and methodology (e.g., Campbell 1984; Craton 1978; Dirks 1986; Friedman 1982; Gibbs et al. 1980; Higman 1979, 1984; Kiple 1984, 1985, 1988a; Kiple and King 1981; Kiple and Kiple 1977; Savitt 1978; Sheridan 1985; Steckel 1986a, 1986b, 1987). But the primary data of historians, whether analyzed by traditional qualitative methods or statistically, fundamentally rests on the surviving written record. In the United States, the best records date from the later years of the slave period, that is, the pre-emancipation decades of the nineteenth century, while there are relatively few data for earlier periods. Two recent major studies of Caribbean slave medical and biological issues (Kiple 1984; Sheridan 1985) have also had to rely almost entirely on more conventional historical sources for their primary data. Both of these works, however, made an effort to incorporate some of the earlier findings of the Newton skeletal analyses; in so doing, the authors acknowledge the actual and potential contributions of bioarchaeological data to issues in African-American medical and biological history. More recently, in a major review of the literature, Kiple (1988b: 15) observes that "much work concerned with the biological past of the black has . . . been done in the field of Caribbean slavery"; in so doing he underscores the unique contributions that bioarchaeology can make to African-American biohistory.

The application of bioanthropology to studying New World slavery and African-

culture, social control in the slave system, processes of culture change, the continuation of African practices in the New World, and, ultimately biohistory (Handler and Lange 1978; see also Handler 1972, 1983; Handler et al. 1979; Handler and Lange 1979; Lange and Carlson 1985; Lange and Handler 1985).

American life is relatively new, and in general very few bioanthropological studies have utilized New World black skeletal populations (e.g., Angel 1976; Angel et al. 1987; Kelley and Angel 1987; Martin et al. 1987; Rose 1985). In particular, employing slave skeletal remains from plantation contexts to examine aspects of slave life is a recent strategy. This strategy has been hampered because most available slave skeletal collections (aside from the Newton sample) are small and have little or no directly associated historical documentation. The entire sample of slave skeletal remains from the American mainland consists of about 100 individuals, mostly from the nineteenth century, in collections ranging in size from 2 to 36 individuals derived from various contexts in Georgia, Maryland, Virginia, and South Carolina (Angel 1977, 1980; Aufderheide et al. 1981, 1985; Burnston 1980a, 1980b; Hudgins 1977; Rathbun 1987; Thomas et al. 1977; Thomas et al. 1980). In addition, 13 skeletons representing eighteenth century urban slaves are known from a New Orleans cemetery (Owsley et al. 1987).

Excluding the 104 Newton individuals, the rest of the Caribbean slave skeletal sample mainly comes from a handful of territories. From the Virgin Islands, 15 undocumented blacks dating from the late eighteenth century (Dailey 1974), 2 probable slaves of unknown date (Ubelaker and Angel 1976), "several" additional undated probable slaves (Lundberg 1980), 2 probable slaves salvaged from a plantation cemetery area (Watters 1984), and a few others from disturbed or unidentified contexts (Stewart 1939; Stewart and Groome 1968). A salvage project in Montserrat recovered (and extensively described) the remains of 17 probable slaves from an unmarked eighteenth century cemetery (Mann et al. 1987; Watters 1987), 1 black skeleton was found in highly

disturbed conditions in Grenada (Stewart and Groome 1968), and an unreported number (but apparent handful) of slaves was excavated from a nineteenth century Cuban plantation cemetery in 1969 or 1970; this may have been the first slave cemetery excavation in the Caribbean (Academia de Ciencias de Cuba 1970). More recently, about 17 apparent slave skeletons, interred between 1770 and 1810, were uncovered from a partially excavated cemetery at Galways plantation in Montserrat (Conrad Goodwin, personal communication, January 7, 1989; the skeletal materials were removed to the University of Tennessee where they are now being analyzed), and approximately 38 slaves were discovered in a partially disturbed nineteenth century cemetery on a coastal plantation in Suriname (Khudabux 1986).

Many of the bones recovered at Newton during the early 1970s were poorly preserved owing to burial near the surface and the effects of a tropical environment; in addition, there were many multiple interments with disturbance and commingling in the graves, resulting in many disarticulated bones. These bones were analyzed in the field, as they were excavated, but the analysis was largely limited to aging and sexing. Attempts were made to deposit the skeletal materials at the Barbados Museum, but the Director at the time was uninterested, for he lacked storage facilities and trained curatorial personnel; and storage space could not be obtained elsewhere on the island. With budgetary limitations preventing shipping all of these materials to the United States, most of the bones were carefully reburied at the Newton site. However, some of the more complete post cranial skeletal materials as well as several semicomplete skulls and all of the recovered teeth were transported to Southern Illinois University where they remained in storage at the Department of Anthropology.¹ Although the dental materials received some additional laboratory analysis prior to the publication of a book on the archaeological research (Handler and Lange 1978), this analysis was generally cursory and was not done by bioanthropologists. Thus, the information obtained was minimal, sometimes incorrect, and for all intents and purposes the teeth remained in storage with their full informative potential yet to be exploited.

With the benefit that hindsight sometimes brings, it became apparent after completion of the archaeological fieldwork, and during the laboratory analysis of skeletal materials, that a major shortcoming of the original research design was the omission from the research group of a bioanthropologist with osteological interests. This deficiency became even clearer as the years progressed and as new developments occurred resulting from the involvement of Robert Corruccini and some of his students in analyzing the Newton materials. In the late 1970s Corruccini became interested in these materials. In a collaborative project with Handler and assisted at various times by Robert Mutaw and Keith Jacobi, he embarked on a systematic and intensive analysis of the skeletal and, especially, the dental materials.

This analysis yielded the most objective and largest set of physical data on an early Caribbean (or, for that matter, New World) slave population. These data produced new and quantifiable information -- and raised questions -- on a variety of hitherto unrecorded slave diseases (for example, dental root hypercementosis, periodontal disease, enamel hypoplasias, caries, and malocclusion/traumatic occlusion) as well as such issues as infections, life expectancy at time of birth, age at death, maturation, and diet. (Recently Jacobi and Della Cook have found evidence for congenital syphilis in the dentition of some of the skeletons; as of this writing, these data are being analyzed for publication.) Bioanthropological analyses have also provided new perspectives and data on nutritional crises and starvation, weaning and infant care, pipe smoking, dental mutilation, dentistry practices, and possible family burial patterns. In addition, the Newton data have raised some important questions about the genetic history of New World African-Americans in general, and the influence of environmental factors on physical traits (tooth size and nonmetric traits) that previously have been considered highly heritable and not particularly influenced by the environment. Finally, the Newton materials have raised hitherto unsuspected results on lead poisoning, an affliction which may have reached epidemic proportions among Barbados slaves and others in the Caribbean more generally (Corruccini and Handler 1980; Corruccini et al.

1982, 1985, 1987a, 1987b, 1988; Handler and Corruccini 1983, 1986; Handler et al. 1982, 1986).

Bioanthropological analyses of the Newton skeletal sample demonstrated the great potential for collaborative research involving bioanthropology, ethnohistory/ historical anthropology, and archaeology in understanding slave life and the biocultural history of New World blacks. Moreover, it also has shown the value of bioanthropological data

in illuminating various areas of the lifeways of slaves and the material conditions of their lives. It was the bioanthropological research and the questions and hypotheses it raised on Barbados slave life, as well as African-American biohistory more generally, that directly stimulated the research design leading to the bioarchaeological project described in these pages.

Chapter 2

Objectives of 1987 Fieldwork

The extensive historical, archaeological, and bioanthropological study of Barbados slaves over the years permitted defining relatively precise research objectives for the 1987 fieldwork. The unique Newton skeletal collection has offered considerable opportunities to investigate various problems associated with slavery from a fresh perspective. Although earlier analyses of Newton's cultural and, particularly, skeletal materials have generated a variety of questions and hypotheses concerning slave culture and biology, the sample from Newton has its own limitations.

Because Newton is the only slave plantation cemetery to have been excavated in Barbados, it was felt that examining others was essential to determine how well Newton represents Barbados slave cemeteries in general; and to independently test hypotheses generated from the Newton data. As noted above, earlier research established that Newton and its slave population typified many Barbados sugar plantations, and that the Newton data could be generalized to Barbados plantation slave life as a whole. This argument rested solely on historical data, albeit relatively firm historical data. Lacking comparative data, however, the Newton-derived picture of slave life in Barbados could not be tested archaeologically or bioanthropologically.

Thus it was critical to test the validity of generalizations based on the Newton data, and to precisely identify biocultural trends and characteristics that may have been peculiar to Newton from those that were more broadly shared. For example, there may have been biological and cultural variations on Barbados plantations, or the development of New World (i.e., creole) cultural patterns may have taken different directions at other plantations based on such factors as idiosyncratic plantation management practices, primary ethnic composition of slave contingents (especially in the earliest years of the slave period), and differences in geographical zones. It was also believed that a variety of bioanthropological

questions could be addressed by an expanded sample of skeletal data. Only minimal investigations of slave pathologies were possible with the Newton sample due to the relatively limited postcranial materials available for analysis. An expanded sample of skeletal data, with more attention to postexcavation preservation of postcrania, could have shed light on a variety of other cultural practices and bioanthropological issues unreported, or only minimally recorded, in historical sources, but which have been raised by the bioanthropological analyses of the Newton remains. Finally, the need for additional data from Barbados was further underscored by the scarcity of comparative New World slave bioanthropological data in general. This scarcity has impeded investigations of the biological dimension of earlier analyses of the Newton data, and has made investigations of biological variation among New World, especially Caribbean, slaves extremely difficult.

In brief, as noted above, archaeological experiences in Barbados in the early 1970s suggested that cemeteries offered the best opportunities for finding undisturbed archaeological contexts relating to slavery. The 1987 field investigation was intended to combine bioarchaeological and ethnohistorical approaches: it aimed at recovering skeletal and cultural materials from new plantation burial sites as well as collecting documentary and oral materials that would provide historical perspectives on these sites. In particular, new data were needed to expand previous findings on biocultural issues so as to address questions in the biological history of African-American populations, test hypotheses raised by previous research, and to investigate aspects of slave life not possible with the Newton sample.

The specific objectives of the 1987 project fell into two overlapping categories: bioanthropological and archaeological.

It was anticipated that acquiring skeletal materials from new plantation

cemeteries would have permitted treating a number of issues and hypotheses that had been raised by the analyses of Newton's skeletal remains. For example, after basic physical features such as race, sex, age, and gross pathologies were determined, it was intended to refine demographic techniques developed in the Newton analyses; more skeletal elements than previously available were to have been used to estimate age at death in a multifactorial design based on principal components analysis (Lovejoy et al. 1985); and additional skeletal data, with historical information, would have permitted evaluating paleodemographic techniques and inferences drawn from skeletal life tables (Corruccini et al. 1988).

The examination for nutritional and infectious pathologies (especially postcranial hyperostosis, orbital osteoporosis, and expanded cranial diploe) was to have been extended since they were lacking in the Newton sample; yet, infection in general, and sickle-cell anemia in particular, would be expected to produce such pathologies (Rathbun 1985; Rose 1985). Also, there was to have been a more detailed description and intensive study of dental enamel hypoplasia and weaning chronologies and postweaning biological stress. Earlier analyses (Corruccini et al. 1985; Handler and Corruccini 1986) indicated that these are promising ways to specify age of occurrence of metabolic stress peaks, such as occur in malnourished populations, especially at weaning. Another research objective involved gathering more data for dental studies: tooth root hypercementosis (Corruccini et al. 1987a); dental mutilations (intentional deformation of the anterior teeth found on a few Barbados skeletons and an apparent index of African birth [Handler et al. 1982]); tooth loss and bilateral extraction (a reflection of dental pathologies as well as, possibly, of dentistry techniques in slave communities); and pipe-smoking patterns. There was also an interest in gaining a better picture of the physical condition of the slave population, including inferred nutrition levels and trauma, and evidence for lead poisoning.

A trace mineral analysis, using atomic absorption spectroscopy, was applied to a sample of Newton's skeletons. This analysis, conducted by Arthur Aufderheide, yielded lead levels three to four times that of mainland

colonial slave samples and comparable to mainland colonial whites. These bone lead levels are high enough to suggest that Newton's slaves regularly displayed manifestations of clinical lead poisoning ranging from mild to marked severity. Moreover, the physical analysis of lead levels, and historical data from Barbados and elsewhere in the Caribbean, has suggested a previously unappreciated epidemic of lead poisoning among slaves (and whites) in Barbados, as well as more generally in early West Indian slave societies (Corruccini et al. 1987b; Handler et al. 1986). Acquiring a greater skeletal sample would have permitted further lead content analysis. The application of modern clinical findings on lead poisoning to the slave skeletal data base could have had implications for understanding other dimensions of slave (and white) behavior and medical problems that are inadequately described or untreated in primary historical sources.

Another major objective of the bioanthropological research was to have been the testing and refinement of a multifactor trait complex, discovered by Corruccini, of previous seemingly unrelated cultural and physical traits. A mutual intercorrelation had been established among intentional dental mutilation, relatively low skeletal lead content, and hypercementosis relative to age, north-headed burial orientation in the graves (a highly atypical pattern at Newton), and absence of coffins (Corruccini et al. 1987b). This trait complex may permit identifying African-born slaves and separating them from slaves born in the New World (i.e., creoles)—a finding which can be of significant value for Afro-American archaeology in general. Since understanding of these traits derived from, rather than preceded, the earlier excavations at Newton, the research design for the 1987 fieldwork anticipated the possibility of a fairly precise identification of African-born slaves. It was assumed that a greater sample population from new cemetery excavations would provide a much firmer basis for differentiating African-born from New World-born slaves, thus enabling a more precise examination of changes in mortuary patterns and material culture in the New World.

A number of questions and hypotheses raised by analyses of the Newton materials also

relate more directly to slave sociocultural practices and dimensions of the slave system. For example, the clustering of discrete genetic traits of the skeleton in certain areas of Newton cemetery raised the possibility that family burial plots occasionally occurred at slave cemeteries. This possible African-influenced behavior is not even alluded to in primary or secondary historical sources and could have been tested further with new skeletal materials. It also was anticipated that a larger skeletal sample would have: 1) enabled expansion of earlier work on dental mutilation and variation in its patterns— not only as an index of African birth, but also as a possible indicator of ethnic ("tribal") or regional origin; 2) permitted a more systematic delineation of tooth extraction and dentistry practices in slave communities, as one of the specialized roles or activities that are unrecorded in historical sources; 3) generated more comparative data on patterns of pipe smoking (a widespread slave custom), and individual habits as these were correlated with such factors as age, sex, and pipes as grave goods; 4) permitted testing suggestions raised by the Newton data that some mortuary practices, for example, burial orientations, grave positioning, and coffin use, showed greater modifications through time and European influences than others which remained essentially West African, such as, importance attached to ancestors, the content of interment and postinterment rites, food and drink sacrifices/offerings at gravesite rituals, grave goods with burials, and the sacred nature of gravesites.

It can be noted here that the mortuary complex in general was a central dimension of slave life, and a key component through which processes of culture change can be traced (Handler and Lange 1978: 208-215). But historical data on this complex are usually sketchy or lacking, particularly with respect to features associated with the actual burial of the corpse, its positioning in the ground, grave goods, etcetera. Thus, any physical data that could help illuminate the mortuary complex, and its associated ideology, would certainly enhance insights into major aspects of slave life, creolization, and issues relating to the retention and modification of the African cultural heritage.

Another issue raised by the Newton research involves prestige and status in plantation slave communities. Historical sources are silent on how slaves determined social status and prestige in their villages and the nature of their own status/ranking systems. In New World slave societies in general, a great deal is known about how white masters allocated status and prestige to slaves; however, much less is known about the extent to which white-defined criteria coincided with or deviated from the criteria that slaves employed among themselves. That slaves in Barbados followed some type of ranking system and allocated prestige in terms of their own cultural criteria is suggested by historical data (for example, leadership in revolts; Handler 1982) and the Newton archaeology; the latter involved a relatively elaborate burial, interpreted as an "obeah man," a person with influence in the slave community because of his ability to cure illness, divine the future, and so forth (Handler 1983; Handler and Lange 1978: 125-132, 1979; Handler et al. 1979). In general, available evidence suggests retention of African-type social status and prestige criteria (at least in the earlier slave period) within the slave community, perhaps later modified by a European induced ranking system based on slave labor productivity and monetary or other value to slave owners.

The distribution of coffins and clay pipes with some Newton burials raised questions not only relating to the mortuary complex and issues of rank and prestige, but also to wider issues of social control within the slave society. For example, slave masters periodically distributed clay pipes (as well as other goods) to their slaves as incentives or rewards for conformity to disciplinary and labor norms. In Barbados, pipes (and tobacco) formed but one facet of the "reward-incentive" system. This system was a major dimension of social control in New World slave societies in general, but has been discussed relatively little by scholars of slavery who have tended to focus on the more obvious negative sanctions and force (cf. Fogel and Engerman 1974).

Because undisturbed archaeological contexts yielding evidence of slave domestic life (for example, village sites) are so difficult to find in intensively cultivated Barbados, the

Newton research strongly suggested that plantation cemeteries offer the best opportunities for recovering information (inadequately treated or omitted in historical sources) on slave material culture and nonplantation labor activities; these include metallurgy, ornament manufacture, and pottery making -- complexes which might suggest African influences on slave culture as well as permit insights into culture change.

In general, then, implicit in the research design for the 1987 fieldwork was the expectation that a successful field season would provide a good sample and quality data that could make some important contributions to several wider research areas and issues. Aside from its potential contributions to the study of a major early English colony and slave society, the project also could have been significant for the comparative study of New World slave sociocultural life, especially in its least documented and earliest periods; African-American biological history, including such issues as genetic admixture, biocultural adaptations, black-specific disease (for example, sickle-cell anemia), microevolution, and the biological development of contemporary African-American populations, slave fertility, age-specific mortality, and morbidity. In

addition, the project could have made methodological and substantive contributions to the archaeological study of mortuary practices (including the relationship of mortuary customs to past forms of social and cultural organization) and to "plantation archaeology," a topical focus within historical archaeology which is increasingly attracting archaeologists, cultural anthropologists, and historians as an approach to investigating slavery and African-American cultures in the Caribbean and southeastern United States.

None of the general or specific objectives mentioned above could be realized for the obvious reason that the 1987 fieldwork yielded no slave burials. But the research questions and hypotheses generated by the Newton skeletal analyses led to an expectation that they could be best addressed by uncovering other plantation slave cemeteries. As a result, a fundamental objective of the 1987 fieldwork was to expand the Newton skeletal sample by excavating in more slave cemeteries on other plantations. Searching for and locating new cemeteries, then, became essential first steps in the research. Before describing how such cemeteries were sought, some background is needed on slave burial practices and cemeteries in Barbados.

Chapter 3 Cemeteries During the Slave Period: Whites, Slaves, and the Newton Cemetery

Although Newton contains the only slave cemetery yet discovered in Barbados, historical evidence clearly indicates that it was not the only plantation with a cemetery. It is equally clear that Barbados is, in a sense, a

vast burial ground: over the several centuries of the slave period, many thousands of people, slave and free, were buried on this compact 166 square-mile island.

White Burials

During slavery, most whites were buried in cemeteries attached to the Anglican parish churches or chapels or, more rarely, the burial grounds of other denominations. Lawrence-Archer (1875: 348), a nineteenth century student of gravestone and tomb inscriptions, writes how early Barbados planters were "particular in their funeral arrangements; and most of the better families interred their dead in leaden coffins, cased in cedar and mahogany"; "family vaults," he adds, "were also common." Such brick or limestone vaults were built in the churchyards and, occasionally, particularly in the earlier periods, on the plantations themselves (Plate 2). Nathaniel Lucas (1953b: 25), a Barbadian who between 1818 and 1828 wrote extensively on the island's early history, noted how "private vaults on plantations were not very uncommon here after the first settlement, the roads etc. making it inconvenient to carry the deceased to church for interment."

It is not unusual in Barbados today to find plantation vaults; in fact, they were located on two of the plantations on which we worked (chapter 6, Malvern and Bissex-Parks); others were observed at, for example, Easy Hall, Halton, Mangrove, and Vauclose. Plantation vaults can be well-hidden from casual passersby, but often have been broken into and their lead coffins vandalized. This practice has been going on for many years: Lawrence-Archer (1875: 348) observed how "many of these tombs have, from time to time, been broken up and rifled--particularly in private cemeteries" (see also, Lucas 1953b: 25). We observed the effects of this vandalization in one of the plantation tombs we examined. According to a knowledgeable Barbadian, a major reason for vandalism is to acquire lead which fishermen can use as weights for their nets.

Slave Burials: Christian and non-Christian

The actual number of slaves who died in Barbados during the period of slavery cannot be determined, but they probably numbered in the hundreds of thousands; for example, over the period 1817 to 1834 alone, there were over 59,000 slave deaths island-wide (Higman 1984: 609). These persons were buried on the island.

Considering the entire slave period, most Barbadian slaves were not baptized and thus could not be buried in the burial grounds of the Anglican Church, the established church of Barbados. Although the number and proportion of slaves buried under Anglican rites was much greater in the later years of the slave period,

especially during the decade or so preceding emancipation in 1834, Anglicans still buried relatively few slaves. Some Christian slaves were interred in parochial church or chapel cemeteries; others were buried on their plantations, usually with a church catechist (but not a minister) attending. The historical evidence also suggests that during the seventeenth century and for much of the eighteenth, the very small number of Anglican-baptized slaves tended to be buried on plantations rather than in church grounds.

By the later slave period, toward the end of the eighteenth century and into the

nineteenth, a few slaves were also buried in cemeteries attached to Protestant missions, such as the United Brethren (Moravians) and Methodists; and in the early slave period, during the seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries, Quakers, Catholics, and Jews also may have had some direct effect on where and how slaves were buried. As a whole, however, all these denominations played a very minor role in slave burials when compared to the Church of England. In general, then, during the slave period the overwhelming majority of Barbadian slaves were unbaptized and thus were not buried in consecrated grounds; even some of the baptized slaves were also buried elsewhere than in church cemeteries (Handler and Lange 1978: 174-181).

Where, then, were the great majority of Barbados' slaves buried during most of the slave period? The historical data are very strong that such slaves were buried on their plantations, either within the slave villages themselves or in separate plantation cemeteries located close to the villages. In 1676, for example, Barbados' governor reported that "the Negroes . . . bury one another in the ground of the plantation where they die" (Atkins 1676), and in the late 1780s another governor observed how "Negroes are superstitiously attached to the burial places of their ancestors and friends. These are generally as near as can be to the houses in which they live. It is frequent to inter a near relation under the bed-place on which they sleep" (Parry 1789:17; see also, Barbados Council 1789).

Although archaeological work in the early 1970s and in 1987 provided no evidence for burials in the slave villages per se, the Newton research confirmed historical evidence for the existence of slave cemeteries. And despite the lack of other archaeological data, solid historical evidence indicates that most Barbadian plantations had their own slave cemeteries.

In 1828, during a period when the Church of England was increasing its missionizing efforts among Barbados slaves, a London based Anglican missionary society surveyed the rectors of the island's eleven parishes. Twenty questions were asked relating to religious matters, including: "In what places

are slaves usually interred?" In their replies, most of the ministers simply responded in terms of baptized slaves, noting, for example, that they were "usually interred in the church and chapel yards" or "frequently interred in the burial ground attached to the parish church." Although these ministers implied that nonbaptized slaves were buried elsewhere, they did not explicitly mention such slaves.

The burial areas of nonbaptized slaves, however, is indicated in several other ministerial replies, all of which provide unequivocal evidence for the existence of plantation cemeteries. The rector of St. Michael, for example, noted how "slaves are always interred in places set apart for that purpose on each plantation" while St. Joseph's rector reported "slaves are usually interred in their burial-places on the estates." "On the plantations to which they belong," answered the rector of St. Lucy, and his colleague from St. Andrew specified, in what could fairly summarize the island-wide picture, "some slaves [i.e., those baptized] are interred in the parish church-yard, others in their usual burying places on the estates." Although the number of baptized slaves had significantly begun to increase by 1828, they still constituted a minority of the slave population; and, indeed, considering the almost two centuries of slavery preceding the ministerial replies, baptized slaves were very few in number (Society for the Conversion 1829; our italics).

Another, albeit more indirect, piece of evidence concerning the existence of plantation slave cemeteries derives from the Consolidated Slave Act of 1826, the result of a major legislative effort to modernize and reform Barbados' slave laws. One of its many clauses prohibits plantation managements from allowing "the funeral of any slave within such plantation . . . after the hour of seven o'clock at night, or any heathenish or idolatrous music, singing, or ceremonies on any such occasion" (An Act to Repeal Several Acts 1826-27: Clause 9).

Historical evidence shows that from as early as the seventeenth century, plantations had burial grounds, but there are no historical data on the factors that determined their locations. Historical evidence, as noted above, indicates that slaves preferred burial places to

be close to their dwellings; and the location of Newton cemetery supports this evidence. However, although plantation managements clearly had final authority in locating cemeteries, it is unknown how much, if any, they allowed slave participation in making the final choices. Moreover with one, albeit weak, exception (a vague reference to Edgcombe plantation in 1812 and the location of its "common burial place" in "a bottom containing a pond, trees & bamboos" [Society for the Improvement 1811-16: 43]), the historical evidence does not indicate where the "usual burying places" were actually located on any given plantation, or if plantations followed a common pattern in situating their burial sites. That is, historical sources are silent about the specific location of plantation cemeteries: there are no known maps or other documentary evidence showing or describing the location of a plantation cemetery on any specific plantation, although a few sources suggest an area in the general vicinity of the slave village (Barbados Council 1789; Parry 1789:17; Society for the Improvement 1811-16:43; even Newton lacks historical evidence, including a plantation map, for the presence of the cemetery whose existence was so clearly demonstrated archaeologically).

Occasional information supplied by Barbadian informants also supports historical data indicating the former existence of plantation cemeteries; yet, such information is generally weak and nonconclusive with respect to the specific location of these cemeteries. Newton is the only case wherein oral evidence actually located a cemetery on a particular plantation; in chapter 6 we describe the few oral reports that suggested cemetery locations on individual plantations.

The Newton Cemetery Area

Lacking historical or other data on specific slave cemeteries, only Newton provides a concrete idea of how such cemeteries might have looked. Briefly, the Newton cemetery area (in the early 1970s as well as the summer of 1987) is in an uncultivated belt of heavy pasture surrounded by fields of sugar cane, and is located close to the site of the former slave village. Because of its shallow soil, the pasture was apparently one of the few plantation areas that had never been cultivated or plowed. The

The difficulty of locating slave cemeteries on specific plantations is increased because they were apparently unmarked. Negative historical data is supported by the Newton cemetery research, surface observations on contemporary Barbados plantations, and occasional oral evidence-- all of which indicate that slave graveyards lacked fences, gravestones, or other readily observable features. In brief, in Barbados today obvious land surface indications of slave cemeteries appear to be lacking. Although the Newton experience indicates that earthen and stone mounds were occasionally constructed over burial sites (Handler and Lange 1978: 104-117), the heavy grass cover on noncultivated fields makes surface observations of such mounds difficult. Because of this grass cover, without excavation it is impossible to distinguish between what may have been burial mounds and other, much more common, mounds that actually may be piles of stone removed from neighboring cultivated fields. (In 1972, Newton's retired manager reported that during his management [1932-1964] "the outlines of graves [i.e., mounds] were easily visible when the grass on the hill had been cut" [F.W. Lange, field notes, January-February 1972].)

In summary, no documentary, oral, or physical evidence specifically locates a slave cemetery on any given plantation. At the same time, some historical evidence on plantation burial practices suggests, and the location of Newton cemetery indicates, that graves were located in the vicinity of the slave village, if not within the village itself.

pasture includes a rise in slope of approximately 8 m. The bottom of the slope is relatively flat and most mortuary activity was evident in this area. The slope becomes more pronounced toward the top of the pasture where it joins a short, abrupt ridgeline that borders a field planted in sugar cane (Plate 1; cf. Handler and Lange 1978: Figures 4, 8).

In the early 1970s, the main burial area, in the relatively flat section of the pasture,

contained several low mounds initially appearing as slight undulations on the dense grass surface. All the mounds were covered with the same thick grass found elsewhere in the cemetery. Some of these mounds were barely visible and easily could have been mistaken for natural features of the terrain; yet, some turned out to contain burials while other distinct low mounds elsewhere in the pasture were simply heaps of rock collected from neighboring cultivated fields. Nonmound burials were often placed between coral limestone outcroppings and most were relatively close to the surface. For example, in a burial complex containing 17 skeletons, 5 were found virtually at the surface (less than 5 cm below ground level) while the depth of the remainder averaged 48 cm -- the deepest was between 62 to 65 cm (Handler and Lange 1978: 105-108, 118, 123).

It was fully expected that the slave cemeteries sought during 1987 would share some of Newton's major physical characteristics:

they would be on relatively sloping uncultivated fields, largely unsuitable for cane cultivation because of their shallow soils; and they probably would be in pasture areas with thick grass covers. Most importantly, these areas would be relatively close to the former slave villages.

Since no direct historical or oral information identified a slave cemetery on a specific plantation, a strategy had to be devised for discovering plantations where a high likelihood existed of finding such a cemetery. Establishing the present location of former slave village sites, then, became the first step in trying to locate possible cemetery areas. The second step, once the approximate site of the slave village had been found, involved discovering nearby plantation areas whose surface physical features resembled those at Newton cemetery.

Chapter 4

Plantation Fields: Naming Practices, and the Negro Yard and Graveyard Fields

Field Names

In describing the procedures for locating slave village sites, some characteristics of plantation field naming practices should be first understood.

From early in Barbados' history, plantations divided their arable acreage into fields of varying sizes. In 1796, for example, Newton's fields ranged from 1 to 18 acres, averaging close to 10 acres, while in the early 1970s its fields averaged close to 7 acres (Handler and Lange 1978: 43-45). In general, plantation fields today can range from 1 acre or 2 to as much as 18 to 20; the average, however, seems to be around 6 or 7.

Today, as in the past, fields are named. Names usually derive from former landholders or residents in the vicinity of the plantation (e.g., Johnson field, Nat Trotman field, Ben Jones field), or agricultural, physical, or cultural features that formerly/presently were/are found on the plantation (e.g., Cherry Tree field, Clay Pond field, Garden field, Gravel Hill field, Horse Pond field, Lime Kiln field, Orchard field, Lower Gate field, Vault field).

Negro Yard Field

As a slave village, the Negro Yard seems to have been universally located in the vicinity of, and often adjacent to, the plantation yard, or Mill Yard. The Mill Yard was the plantation's core area. It encompassed the owner's or manager's house (the "mansion house"), the sugar mill (which was a windmill for most of the slave period), boiling house, and various other buildings connected with plantation operations, such as stables, storage sheds, blacksmith's shop. After emancipation in 1834, the slave villages were removed (the temporal process varying from plantation to plantation) from their original locations near the Mill Yards, and the villages of the ex-slaves were established at the peripheries of plantations. The former village sites, or parts

The ages of field names and field acreages on a given plantation can vary a great deal, and over the years both may have changed. For example, in earlier times plantations depended on livestock and thus needed fodder, one reason why otherwise arable lands were kept in pasture; as dependency on livestock decreased, pastures were converted to sugar cane, and, thus, new fields were created and given new names (Chandler 1968:134). Although it is often difficult to obtain historical (literary or oral) information on particular fields, many field names today seem to have existed for a very long time, even well into the slave period (Chandler 1968; Cruickshank 1935; Old Plantation 1940). One such name is "Negro Yard" or "Nigger Yard," the latter still being used today by some older black and white Barbadians. During the slave period, Negro Yard referred to the plantation area containing the slave village, although most Barbadians today are unaware of the origins of this field name.

of them, were usually converted to agricultural use, but they continued to be called Negro Yards.

Ethnographic fieldwork and a study of modern or reasonably modern plantation maps show that quite a few plantations in Barbados today retain the field name Negro Yard; in fact, it is among the more common names found on modern plantations (Chandler 1968:135). Even if a Negro Yard no longer exists, one can occasionally find an elderly or retired manager or worker who remembers which of the current plantation fields was formerly called Negro Yard. Visual inspection of plantations with Negro Yards, as reported by informants, or an examination of modern plantation maps with field names (see, for example, Figures 2, 5, 8, 12;

cf. Handler and Lange 1978: 47-48), show that the Negro Yard, as might be predicted from the historical evidence in general, is invariably located very close to, or adjoining, the Mill Yard-- indicating the general area where the slave village once had been located; today the Negro Yard field is usually planted in sugar cane.²

Graveyard Field

Graveyard is another field name which seemed to offer a very promising lead for finding a cemetery, but its meaning remains ambiguous. In 1935, J. Graham Cruickshank (1935: 166), the first writer to draw attention to the potential that field names had for reconstructing plantation histories, briefly observed, without providing supporting data, that Barbados' field names included "many Graveyards." And in 1983, during casual and independent conversations with two Barbadian historians, knowledgeable about plantation conditions, the Project Director was told that Graveyard fields were common on contemporary plantations. Yet, it has been difficult to find this name in, for example, the published literature and manuscript lists of plantation field names, or on plantation maps. Moreover, the general absence of information in such sources confirms the conclusion reached after ethnographic field investigations of a number of sugar plantations (chapter 5): as a field name, Graveyard is apparently not very common, and is certainly much rarer than the Negro Yard field.

But whereas the historical meaning of Negro Yard is clear, the meaning of Graveyard is uncertain, despite its seemingly obvious association with burials. Cruickshank (1935:166) reported that "sometimes, leaden coffins have been dug" from the Graveyard fields. Since nonvault burials occasionally took place on plantations, especially in the early periods, it is not implausible that old coffins would have come to light over the years. In any case, lead coffins would have been confined to whites; it is highly unlikely that slaves ever were buried in them, although occasionally they were buried in wooden ones (Handler and Lange 1978).

Thus, the present location of a plantation's Negro Yard field offers the first clue in searching for that plantation's cemetery. The underlying assumption derives from general historical evidence in conjunction with the findings at Newton: the cemetery would be in the vicinity of the Negro Yard.

Whatever the case, historical information on Graveyard fields is lacking and it is unknown if these field names existed during the slave period. Cruickshank (1935:166) also experienced this problem over five decades ago. Asking himself "How far back do these (field) names go?" he replied: "The oldest inhabitants now cannot remember . . . when human beings were buried in that deep black soil." In addition, when the Project Director asked informants why a field is called Graveyard, they could not illuminate the issue and were generally vague in their responses. Most informants specifically queried by the Project Director on this point simply replied that they were unaware why a Graveyard field was so named. (J. D. Chandler, a prominent Barbados planter and student of field names, made a similar observation over 45 years ago, also confirming the weakness of oral traditions in certain matters. In trying to ascertain why various fields bear particular names, Chandler [1968: 134] notes how it "is very difficult to discover the facts. If one asks the oldest labourers on an estate they say that 'they were called so since they could remember'- no logical reason can be given.")

Some informants speculated that Graveyard field received its name because it had once contained a "vault" or tomb of a white planter family. Although no present archaeological or physical evidence substantiates this reasoning, it might be supported by Cruickshank's above-quoted observation on the occasional discovery of lead coffins in Graveyard fields (in our experience however, a field with such a burial spot is called Vault field). Other informants suggested that the "old time people" (race unspecified) had been buried in Graveyard fields. However, such informants could not provide any substantive

support for their opinions, such as direct knowledge that human remains had been found, or an oral tradition they had heard. Perhaps some of these Graveyard fields were associated with the 1854 cholera epidemic, although the field name Cholera, which is not uncommon, is a more explicit indicator of function (Chandler 1968:134; see also Appendix A).

A few informants opined that Graveyard fields are named such because in the "old days" animals (e.g., cows, horses, draft oxen) were buried in them. Once again, such informants could not provide direct or hearsay evidence for the actual discovery of bones, or an oral tradition on the plantation. Others emphatically denied that plantation animals were buried in only one plantation locale; they

maintained that animals were buried all over a plantation, wherever the soil was sufficiently deep to prevent carcasses from being easily exhumed by dogs. (The relatively deep burial of human beings to prevent such exhumation also might have been a factor in slave burials; see chapter 7.)

In general, whatever its historical or cultural meaning, because the name Graveyard seemed to offer promise for human burials, the quest for plantations with Negro Yard fields also included a search for Graveyard fields. (The two plantations investigated in 1987 with Graveyard fields yielded no evidence to illuminate this issue; see chapters 6 and 7, Malvern and Bissex-Parks.)

Chapter 5

Searching for Cemeteries Before the 1987 Season

One might assume that on an island as small as Barbados, with its long period of slavery and large slave population, and with a high population density and intensive cultivation going on for centuries, plantation slave cemeteries would be widely known and readily identifiable. This, however, is far from the case: Newton was not only the first slave cemetery to be known in Barbados, but to this day, despite a variety of research efforts, it continues to be the only one.

Since the early 1970s and the work at Newton, the slave cemetery has received wide and favorable publicity in Barbados (through newspaper and magazine articles, government-sponsored television programs, radio interviews, and public lectures). Yet, no other plantation cemeteries had been brought to the Project Director's attention despite his inquiries over an extended period of time. For example, although he continued to maintain contact with Barbadians who were connected with local historical studies or who were closely associated with the sugar industry, no one could provide indirect or direct knowledge of any plantation slave cemetery. Also, in 1980, he advertised in the *Journal of the Barbados Museum and Historical Society*, mentioning his interest in continuing archaeological investigations that would build upon the findings at Newton: "planters or others intimately acquainted with Barbadian plantations" were asked for any information concerning "slave burial grounds on particular plantations." The ad elicited but one response concerning the discovery of some bones while excavating a house foundation, but no firm information on a cemetery. In January 1986, Barbados' television station aired an interview with the Project Director and Dr. Henry Fraser, a well-known Barbadian physician. The program focused on discoveries of lead poisoning among Newton's slaves and miscellaneous issues relating to the cemetery. The program was seen by many and, from all accounts, was well received. The audience was asked to bring any knowledge of skeletal remains on plantation lands to the attention of the physician or Project Director; no reports were received. Finally,

during the 1970s and 1980s the Project Director's continuing historical research into Barbados slavery has yielded no maps or other documentary evidence identifying a plantation burial ground, nor any significant literary evidence that would help to specifically locate a cemetery on a particular plantation (as noted earlier, nothing in the large corpus of Newton manuscripts even indicates that the plantation had a slave cemetery; its presence was only established through archaeology).

Over the years, the Project Director's written and oral inquiries concerning slave cemeteries tended to be informal, relatively nonsystematic, and sporadic. While in Barbados for one purpose or another, he might ask plantation personnel if they had ever found any human bones or heard of anyone who had found such bones on plantation lands. Answers were invariably in the negative. The attempts to locate slave cemeteries on other plantations in the years following the Newton excavations yielded some information, but nothing definite. Not until two recent field trips did such inquiries become more systematic, involving more concerted efforts to acquire information that might specifically locate cemeteries.

One three-month trip, from October 1983 to January 1984 (funded by the Social Science Research Council), was primarily devoted to other research interests, but some time was given to locating cemeteries on certain plantations, selected because of their fairly well documented histories. Although no burial grounds were found, as a result of this work it increasingly became apparent that finding cemeteries would be much more difficult than the Newton experience suggested; moreover, a greater field research effort would be needed in order to adequately survey plantation lands and conduct interviews with workers and managers/owners.

Circumstances did not permit this ideal field situation to materialize, but about half of a three-week trip to Barbados in December 1985 and January 1986 (funded by the Graduate School of Southern Illinois University),

involved searching for cemetery areas through interviews and documentary research. This trip also failed to yield evidence for cemeteries. But it further confirmed a gradually emerging realization that aside from a chance finding of someone with direct knowledge of a slave cemetery, the most productive approach would be through archaeological exploration. The trip also established a few plantations where there appeared to be some likely mortuary areas. A two-week trip in January 1987 also focused on related issues as well as public relations and logistical preparations for the archaeological investigations that by now were scheduled to take place during the following summer.

The 1983-1984 and 1985-1986 field trips involved visits to plantations, historical research in the Barbados Department of Archives, and informal interviews with local historians and present or retired plantation workers and management personnel.

Several procedures were employed in attempting to locate cemetery areas. For example, review of earlier field notes caused revisits to some of the plantations investigated in the early 1970s. Their Negro Yards were relocated and efforts were made to develop leads that might have been missed or not pursued in earlier years. However, more time was spent gathering information on new plantations. A common approach was to visit plantations where some firm historical knowledge was already available, or a fair amount of historical documentation was known to exist (also, plantations in different geographical zones were sought). For various reasons, some of these plantations could not be visited; others were visited, sometimes with introductions beforehand to plantation managers or owners. If no introductions were available, then efforts were made to establish contact with someone on the plantation when it was visited. Information was gathered on whether the plantation had a Negro Yard or Graveyard field (if so, where these fields were located) and on field names in general; whether anyone had knowledge of a plantation field or area where the "old time people" were buried; if anyone knew someone, or had personal experience himself, of finding bones or human remains; and agricultural and other plantation

practices in modern times. Also sought were the names and residences of the oldest current or retired workers or managers/owners who could shed light on plantation customs and local traditions in earlier years, especially during the pre-World War II period. Efforts were made to visit such persons (the workers often lived in neighboring villages) and to elicit more information. If the interviews yielded promising results, then certain plantation fields were visually explored looking for physical clues suggestive of burial areas.

In a more casual fashion, while driving around the island to either visit friends or informants, occasional impulse stops at plantations focused on meeting individuals who could provide the types of information delineated above. If this information was encouraging, efforts were made to establish the location of the Negro Yard/Graveyard fields, and obtain the name of the plantation manager (if the manager had not been spoken to on the initial visit); arrangements would be made for a later visit when the relevant fields could be visually inspected.

Leads provided by Barbadian friends or acquaintances who were knowledgeable about particular plantations also were followed. For example, the owner or manager of one plantation might relate that he knew of another plantation possessing a Negro Yard; or he might offer the name of another owner or manager who would have knowledge about cemetery locations; or, during an interview, a plantation manager might report that there was a Negro Yard on a plantation he had previously managed. Similarly, a retired worker on one plantation could know someone in another village who possessed knowledge about a neighboring plantation.

In total, field trips yielded data on 36 plantations. However, as indicated earlier, in not one case was there certain evidence for a slave cemetery. Thus, it was important to develop other lines of inquiry that would offer evidence of plantations with likely possibilities. All but 3 of the 36 plantations were visited at least once, with sufficient time to establish if the plantation had (or ever had within living memory) a Negro Yard or Graveyard field. Fifteen plantations appeared

to have neither and were eliminated from further research; of the remaining 21 plantations, 19 had Negro Yards and 2 had both Negro Yard and Graveyard fields (Figure 1). Circumstances prevented visiting three of the plantations with only Negro Yards, but the other 18 with some archaeological research potential were visited.

On these visits, the fields were inspected visually and available plantation personnel were interviewed. Invariably, as noted earlier, the Negro Yards were located where previous experience would have predicted their locations, that is, immediately adjacent to, or in proximity of, the Mill Yard. All of the Negro Yards were arable and, when visited, were usually in one stage or another of sugar cane growth; sometimes various food plants were intercropped among the newly growing cane. With the Negro Yard field as a point of departure, the model developed from Newton guided further observations. (It is important to reemphasize that prior to the 1987 fieldwork, historical research had established Newton as a fairly typical Barbados plantation. As a result, a major assumption of earlier bioanthropological and archaeological analyses was that the Newton findings could be generalized to other Barbados plantations and slave contingents. This assumption also guided the search for new plantation cemeteries.) Areas adjacent to and surrounding the Negro Yard were visually inspected. Emphasis was placed on searching for topographical features similar to those at Newton cemetery, that is, sloping pastures with rock outcroppings and apparent shallow soils; and, despite the often thick grass cover in such areas, any surface signs that suggested mounds (because of the grass cover, however, frequently there was little or no surface indications of mounds).

If a plantation contained promising areas, interviews tried to establish if these areas had ever experienced any kind of agricultural activity and the nature of such activity; and if there was any evidence for the discovery of human bones in the fields. Discussions with local historians and research in local library and archival facilities attempted to determine what secondary historical information was already available on the plantation. Also, primary source

materials were sought that might have helped to reconstruct a plantation's history during the slave period.

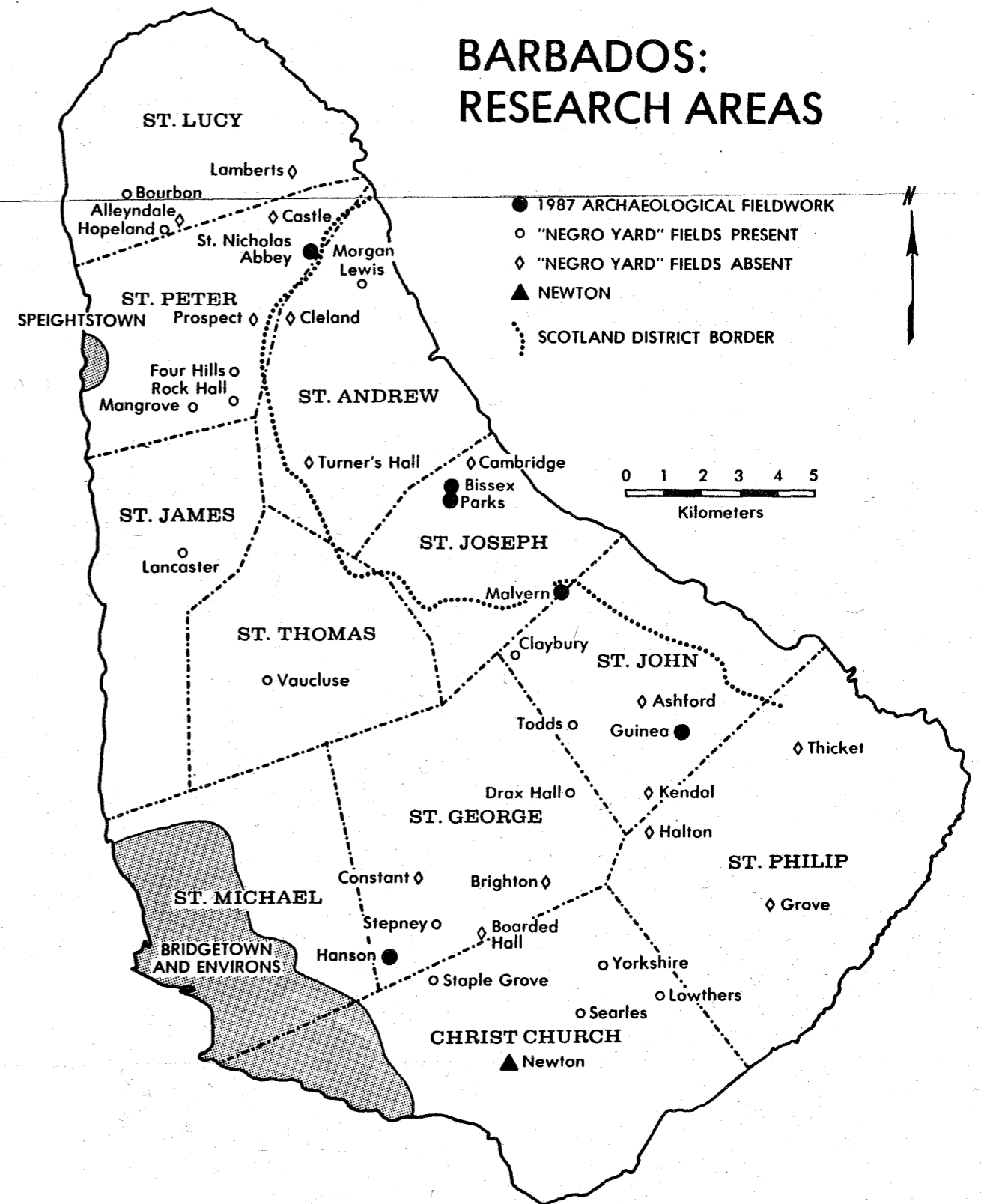
Visual inspection of plantation fields, interviews, and documentary evidence ultimately suggested nine plantations: Bissex-Parks (counted as one), Four Hills, Guinea, Hanson, Hopeland, Malvern, St. Nicholas Abbey, Stepney, and Yorkshire (Figure 1). These offered (for sometimes different reasons) what appeared to be promising leads for further research, or strong possibilities that they contained slave cemeteries which could be archaeologically located. All nine had Negro Yards and two also had Graveyards (a third Graveyard field was located during 1987, but too late in the field season to explore; chapter 6, Lamberts). At least some known documentation existed for all of the plantations, and preliminary research had established that all had histories extending into the early years of slavery. All nine had uncultivated pastures not far from their Negro Yards. Finally, as it turned out, the nine represented several geographical zones of Barbados, with varying geological and topographical features and rainfall patterns.

The original research strategy called for investigating from four to six of the most promising of the nine plantations, where interviews and surface observations had identified specific field areas that appeared to yield the greatest chance of finding physical evidence for a cemetery. The actual number of plantations to be investigated was to depend on the specifics of field conditions as well as time and financial constraints.

Ultimately, five plantations were selected. All had features that were broadly similar to Newton, including relatively shallow, rocky (hence uncultivated), sloping pastures not far from their Negro Yards. (As at Newton, it was expected that most burials would probably be relatively shallow.) Each had additional specific characteristics, discussed in chapter 6, that influenced its selection. The field situation itself was to determine whether all five would be actually investigated and how much time would be devoted to each. As the investigation progressed no burials or evidence of a cemetery

was found, and, in the end, work took place at the five plantations: Guinea, Malvern, Hanson,

St. Nicholas Abbey, and Bissex-Parks (Figure 1).



1. Barbados: plantation research areas