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Edward Long's observations on Jamaican slavery and British slave trade abolition*

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ABSTRACT

This note presents for the first time material on Edward Long's views on Jamaican enslavement and British slave trade abolition in 1804. His letter of that year, deposited at the William Salt Library, Stafford, shows that in old age he adapted his position from being an ardent slave trade supporter to a stance where ending the slave trade could be accepted. Long emphasized that, in circumstances where slave revolt and Jamaica's security were concerned, the pro-slave trade argument would need to be shelved, the implementation of abolition would be acceptable and planters could then concentrate their efforts on amelioration.

Edward Long was a prominent absentee planter whose detailed dissection of eighteenth-century Jamaica is found in his three-volume work *The History of Jamaica or, A General Survey of the Antient and Modern State of That Island: With Reflections on Its Situation, Settlements, Inhabitants, Climate, Products, Commerce, Laws, and Government* (1774). This was originally published anonymously. Frequently used by historians as the most thorough examination of Jamaican politics and socio-economic conditions during the slave trade era, it can be supplemented by the eclectic notes and compendia Long assembled in manuscript form for a projected second edition of the work that was never completed.[1] *The History of Jamaica* is infused with Long's racist view that the White and Black races were separate, that human races were of separate origin and that Whites were superior to Blacks, but it includes a vast amount of factual information for historians examining Jamaica's eighteenth-century society.[2]

Long had extensive experience of living in Jamaica, where his great-grandfather had arrived in 1655 as part of the English military expedition to conquer the island. His family owned two sugar estates: Seven Plantations (later Longville) and Lucky Valley in Clarendon parish, which had over 300 enslaved people by the late 1760s.[3] After his father died in 1757, leaving him with a slim inheritance,

* The article has benefited from constructive comments made by David Ryden and two anonymous referees.

[1] This material is deposited at the British Library, Additional MSS. 12,402-40, 18,269-75, 18,959-63, 21,931, 22,639, 22,676-80, 43,379. It is introduced and described in K. Morgan, *Material on the History of Jamaica in the Edward Long Papers Held at the British Library* (Wakefield, 2007). The other main collection of manuscripts relating to Long's Jamaican interests are business partnership papers, plans and deeds deposited among the Long family of Saxmundham papers at the Suffolk Record Office, Ipswich.

[2] F. Shyllon, *Edward Long's Libel of Africa: the Foundation of British Racism* (Newcastle upon Tyne, 2021), pp. 44–102; and S. Seth, *Difference and Disease: Medicine, Race, and the Eighteenth-Century British Empire* (Cambridge, 2018), pp. 208–40. See also C. Hall, *Lucky Valley: Edward Long and the History of Racial Capitalism* (Cambridge, 2024).

[3] D. Leigh, 'The origins of a source: Edward Long, Coromantee slave revolts and *The History of Jamaica*', *Slavery & Abolition*, xl (2019), 295–320, at p. 301. For plans and a description of the Lucky Valley estate, see B. W. Higman, *Jamaica Surveyed: Plantation Maps and Plans of the Eighteenth and Nineteenth Centuries* (Kingston, 1988), pp. 84–7. On the slave population at Lucky Valley, see Hall, *Lucky Valley*, pp. 1, 113.

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Edward Long was advised by his uncle Beeston to seek his fortune in Jamaica.[4] Between 1757 and 1769 Long resided in Jamaica as a planter, vice admiralty court judge and secretary to Lieutenant Governor Henry Moore, his brother-in-law, but, owing to ill health, then lived in England until his death in 1813.[5] During the 1760s Long regularly purchased enslaved African people for Lucky Valley but he did not establish sole ownership of the property until the early 1770s. By then he was an absentee proprietor who relied on an attorney to manage his estate.[6] After returning to England with his wife and young children, he participated regularly in meetings of various groups in London that supported the plantocracy and especially its absentee clientele, taking a close interest in sugar and enslavement in Jamaica, which imported far more enslaved people than any other British Caribbean island.[7] Vincent Brown notes that, by the 1770s, Long was 'an authoritative advocate for the West Indian planter class'.[8] Long continued his close interest in Jamaican affairs in later age. In the period between May 1785 and May 1787 Long attended forty-six meetings of the London-based Society of West India Merchants and Planters.[9] In 1792 he was active in subcommittees promoting the pro-slave trade cause in parliament.[10]

Because of his importance as a chronicler of Jamaican history, it is a matter of historical interest that one should understand his views on Jamaican enslavement in the years immediately preceding the abolition of the British slave trade. This is, however, a lacuna in existing scholarship, for no historian has published anything on this topic. To date no historian has located substantial information about his views on enslavement, the slave trade and sugar cultivation after he had published *The History of Jamaica*.[11] Far fewer manuscript letters by Long survive that deal with enslavement, the slave trade and abolitionism compared with the plethora of such documents available for his contemporaries, the Jamaica planters Simon Taylor and Henry Goulburn.[12]

Long's observations on Jamaican enslavement and the abolition of the British slave trade can be discerned, however, from a manuscript letter overlooked by historians that is the focus of this note. The letter in question is included in a batch of correspondence written by Long to his long-time friend Mary Jervis (1737–1828), the wife of William Henry Ricketts, who had been born in Jamaica.[13] Thirty-five letters by Long are included in these papers, covering the half century to Long's death. No extant replies by Jervis survive. Long focused on personal and family matters when corresponding with Jervis. The only historian to have cited these letters in a publication is Catherine Hall in her recent monograph *Lucky Valley: Edward Long and the History of Racial Capitalism*.[14] Hall cites the letters and quotes from them in passing in an illustrative way to support broader points she makes. However, the one letter that deals with enslavement, the slave trade and abolitionism

[4] C. Hall, 'Racial capitalism: what's in a name?', *History Workshop Journal*, xciv (2022), 5–21, at p. 8.
[5] V. Brown, *Tacky's Revolt: the Story of an Atlantic Slave War* (Cambridge, Mass., 2020), p. 13.
[6] Hall, *Lucky Valley*, pp. 110–13, 222, 409.
[7] See two publications by D. B. Ryden: *West Indian Slavery and British Abolition, 1783–1807* (Cambridge, 2009), pp. 41, 57, 62; and 'Spokesmen for oppression: Stephen Fuller, the Jamaica Assembly, and the London West India Interest during popular abolitionism, 1788–1795', *Jamaican Historical Review*, xxvi (2013), 5–15, at p. 12.
[8] Brown, *Tacky's Revolt*, p. 225.
[9] Ryden, *West Indian Slavery and British Abolition*, p. 57.
[10] Hall, *Lucky Valley*, p. 429.
[11] This is apparent from studies on Long: see G. Metcalf, 'Introduction', in E. Long, *The History of Jamaica: Reflections on Its Situation, Settlements, Inhabitants, Climate, Products, Commerce, Laws and Government* (3 vols., London, 1774, repr. London, 1970), n.p.; H. Johnson, 'Edward Long, historian of Jamaica', in Long, *History of Jamaica* (repr. Kingston, 2002), pp. i–xxv; C. Hall, 'Whose memories? Edward Long and the work of re-remembering', in *Britain's History and Memory of Transatlantic Slavery*, ed. K. Donington, R. Hanley and J. Moody (Liverpool, 2016), pp. 129–49; C. Hall, 'The slavery business and the making of "race" in Britain and the Caribbean', *Current Anthropology*, lxi, suppl. xxii (2020), S172–S182; T. Burnard, *Jamaica in the Age of Revolution* (Philadelphia, 2020), pp. 43–69, 263–8; and Shyllon, *Edward Long's Libel of Africa*. Long's publications other than *History of Jamaica* are briefly described in Burnard, *Jamaica in the Age of Revolution*, pp. 47, 263–4.
[12] The Taylor correspondence, mainly deposited at Cambridge University Library and the Institute of Commonwealth Studies, University of London, is used extensively in C. Petley, *White Fury: a Jamaican Slaveholder and the Age of Revolution* (Oxford, 2018) and in his articles '"Home" and "this country": Britishness and Creole identity in the letters of a transatlantic slaveholder', *Atlantic Studies*, vi (2009), 43–61; and 'Slaveholders and revolution: the Jamaican planter class, British imperial politics, and the ending of the slave trade, 1775–1807', *Slavery & Abolition*, xxxix (2018), 53–79. Goulburn's extensive correspondence is contained in his family papers at the Surrey History Centre, Woking. For a description, see K. Morgan, *Papers Relating to the Jamaica Estates of the Goulburn Family of Betchworth House From the Surrey History Centre* (Wakefield, 2008).
[13] The letter is located in a bound volume entitled 'Letters from Edward Long from Jamaica to Mr and Mrs Ricketts' (Stafford, William Salt Library, Parker-Jervis Collection, 49/90/44/1).
[14] See Hall, *Lucky Valley*, pp. 90, 114–15, 130, 155, 200, 253–4, 372.

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has been omitted. This letter, dated 6 June 1804, was written from Arundel Park, Sussex, the seat of Long's son-in-law.[15] The first half deals with purely domestic matters of mutual concern to Long and Jervis, with a proud recounting by Long of his many children and grandchildren. This is not reproduced here. The remainder of the letter deals with Jamaican enslavement and the prospect of slave trade abolition. It is the only known manuscript source where Long explained his position on these matters. This is transcribed in full in the next section. The final section of this note analyses the themes raised by Long in his appraisal of the precarious situation of enslavement and the slave trade relating to Jamaica. Long's letter of 6 June 1804 has never been referred to in any previous publication, but its contents are centrally important for his views, in later life, of Jamaican enslavement and the abolition of British transatlantic slave trade.

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In his letter of 6 June 1804 Long wrote to 'my dearest Madam' as follows:

> You ask my opinion of what is called the Slave Trade? I confess to you, that when I consider that the number of slaves in Jamaica, for which the Poll-tax was paid in the year 1801, amounted to no less than 307,094,[16] which was probably short of the actually existing number by several hundred, I cannot avoid believing the Colony to be at the moment in a very perilous situation. The example of successful revolt in Hispaniola[17] cannot but be known to the generality of our Negroes & some degree of intercourse between the two islands cannot be prevented. Perhaps the wiser heads among them may choose to wait, & to see the consequence of the Revolution to their neighbours, & how far it has bettered their condition, and improved their comforts. If I were not an interested party, I suppose it might appear to me a measure of true policy, & humanity, where the disproportion of white inhabitants to slaves is already much too great for public safety, that an effectual check at least, if not a total stop, should be put to further importation of African Blacks, who, if any insurrection was to be agitated, would undoubtedly be employed as the fittest instrument for beginning the Tragedy of Murder, Burning, & Spoliation. Certainly I, tho' an interested party, wo[ul]d wish an entire stop to further importations, if experience of many years had not confirmed me in opinion that notwithstanding every possible indulgence, & under the mildest & most attentive management, there is no preventing the recurrence at certain periods of very great mortality, occasioned either by Seasons of Drouth & Scarcity or the visitation of Epidemic Diseases. Chasms will happen from these casualties unfortunately too frequent in Jamaica, too great for births to repair; & when no recruits can be procured by other means, the Properties must necessarily go to ruin, very rapidly.
>
> I am sensible however that an abolition wo[ul]d it is true put an end to all further speculation of settling new sugar estates, but it wo[ul]d operate most forcibly upon the planters in general to adopt with serious order every practicable means of increasing or sustaining their stock of labourers by birth, and the careful rearing of negroe infants to maturity; for whatever attention is paid to this subject by some, I imagine it is at present not so generally, & surely not so successfully, or it ought, or as it wo[ul]d be, if the minds of all were fixed upon this object from inducements of positive necessity. I hazard these opinions to you but without being sure that they are right, for I may be mistaken in my ideas. I do not feel easy when I turn my eyes upon the new black Republic,[18] which perhaps is only no. 1. Let us pray that Jamaica may not become no. 2. I wish my dear Madam to hear your sentiments. Believe me to be ever your affectionate & faithful E. L.

[15] Long led a peripatetic existence in England but by 1803 he was living at Park House, Arundel (R. Mowbray Howard, *Records and Letters of the Family of the Longs of Longville, Jamaica, and Hampton Lodge, Surrey* (2 vols., London, 1925), i. 123). Many personal letters to and from Long are transcribed in these volumes but none of them refer to slavery, the slave trade or abolitionism.

[16] This is higher than Sir William Young's figure of 280,000 taxed slaves in Jamaica in 1805, but it fits well between David Ryden's estimates of a total Jamaican population of 246,043 in 1787 and 326,667 in 1805 (Ryden, *West Indian Slavery and British Abolition*, p. 301).

[17] That is, French Saint-Domingue, on the western side of the island of Hispaniola. The revolt lasted from 1791 to 1804.

[18] That is, Haiti, which had declared its independence and had assumed its name on 1 January 1804.

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Long's letter reveals his fears about the state of Jamaica in 1804, three years before Britain abolished its slave trade. It was written at a time when the anti-slave trade movement had been lobbying parliament to curtail transatlantic slaving since 1788 and also when the enforced passage of enslaved African people to Jamaica was still growing.[19] Newspaper reports indicate a high public interest in the slave trade by 1804.[20] The letter was also written in a period when British West India planters were increasingly attacked by abolitionists and forced to defend enslavement and the slave trade.[21] Interestingly, Long's letter was written less than three weeks after the West India Interest rejected both the suspension and the abolition of the British slave trade.[22] It also coincided with William Wilberforce's renewed push for slave trade abolition in the house of commons after a hiatus between June 1799 and April 1804 when he chose not to introduce such bills to parliament.[23] Three readings of the abolition bill occurred between 30 May and 25 June 1804, each leading to a majority for the abolitionists. In the voting on these measures, the anti-abolitionist vote was halved from its position between 1796 and 1799.[24] However, on 3 July 1804 a debate on the bill in the House of Lords was postponed until the next parliamentary session.[25]

The Society of West India Merchants and Planters, which Long and his two cousins Beeston and Samuel frequently attended, had met on 17 May 1804. On that occasion Wilberforce's latest bid to abolish the slave trade was noted and the Society registered its 'opposition to a project big with such importance and ruinous consequences to their Interests'.[26] At a Society meeting of 5 June 1804, at which Beeston and Samuel Long were present, a petition of the West India merchants and planters also attacked the current turbulent situation in Saint-Domingue, which was labelled as being in a state of 'savage anarchy'. The Society argued that the 'disastrous events' in Saint-Domingue 'and the present deplorable situation of that colony' coupled with Wilberforce's abolition bill would produce 'the most serious and alarming mischief' in the Caribbean.[27] Certainly, the situation in Saint-Domingue, which became the free republic of Haiti on 1 January 1804, was worrying for political stability in the western Caribbean. The foundation of Haiti was the culmination of Saint-Domingue slave revolt of 1791–a massive defiant outbreak in which over 400,000 enslaved people overthrew their masters in the richest sugar colony in the world. Because of its scale, the fact that it was the only successful slave revolt in the modern western world, and the relative proximity of Saint-Domingue to Jamaica, anyone with property in Jamaica feared that the spirit of rebellion would spread over the 320 miles between the territories. In the 1790s no such revolt occurred in Jamaica, conceivably because military garrisons were strong there, but the persistence of the impact of the Saint-Domingue revolt did not leave room for complacency by Jamaica's planter class.[28] Colonial elites knew that the sheer scale of the Saint-Domingue slave rebellion meant that they could not rest on their laurels about the security of the plantation regime.[29] In fact, Jamaica's lieutenant-governor Adam Williamson gathered information about slave conspiracies in the wake of the Saint-Domingue uprising and declared martial law on 10 December 1791. Fears of revolt continued in Jamaica throughout the rest of the 1790s.[30] The tumultuous social, economic, political and military problems in Saint-Domingue persisted into the early years of the nineteenth century. In the spring of 1804, for example, Black Haitians massacred French

[19] Statistics on the buoyancy of the British slave trade *c.*1800–7 are available in the *Transatlantic Slave Trade Database* <https://www.slavevoyages.org> [accessed 17 July 2024]. For tabular details on the sequence of anti-slave trade measures and their fate, see D. Richardson, *Principles and Agents: the British Slave Trade and Its Abolition* (New Haven, Conn., 2022), p. 226.

[20] Richardson, *Principles and Agents*, p. 213.

[21] T. Burnard, 'Powerless masters: the curious decline of Jamaican sugar planters in the foundational period of British abolitionism', *Slavery & Abolition*, xxxii (2011), 185–98.

[22] D. H. Porter, *The Abolition of the Slave Trade in England, 1784–1807* (Hamden, Conn., 1970), p. 126.

[23] Richardson, *Principles and Agents*, pp. 231–2.

[24] R. Anstey, *The Atlantic Slave Trade and British Abolition, 1760–1810* (London, 1975), p. 344. For the voting figures, see R. Blackburn, *The Overthrow of Colonial Slavery, 1776–1848* (London, 1988), p. 303. There is no record of any debates on these measures in *Hansard* <https://hansard.parliament.uk/commons/> [accessed 18 July 2024].

[25] Porter, *The Abolition of the Slave Trade*, p. 128.

[26] University of London, Special Collections, Senate House Library, Minutes of the Society of West India Merchants and Planters, 17 May 1804, microfilm M 915.

[27] Minutes of the Society of West India Merchants and Planters, 5 June 1804.

[28] D. Geggus, 'The enigma of Jamaica in the 1790s: new light on the causes of slave rebellions,' *William and Mary Quarterly*, xliv (1987), 274–99.

[29] C. L. Brown, 'Slavery and Antislavery, 1760–1820' in *Oxford Handbook on the Atlantic World, c.1450–1820*, ed. N. P. Canny and P. D. Morgan (Oxford, 2011), pp. 602–17, at p. 608.

[30] E. B. Rugemer, *Slave Law and the Politics of Resistance in the Early Atlantic World* (Cambridge, Mass, 2018), pp. 234–6.

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colonists on the orders of their leader, the formerly enslaved Jean-Jacques Dessalines.[31] Jamaican planters such as Simon Taylor, well aware of the situation in Haiti, worried about the effect abolition would have on the stability and future prospects of the British Caribbean.[32]

In 1802 James Stephen had argued that the rebellion of enslaved people at Saint-Domingue had raised Black expectations of freedom and that this could spread to the rest of the Caribbean. Two years later, with the creation of Haiti as an independent Black republic, he thought Britain should acknowledge it as an independent state but that Haiti would not engage politically and diplomatically with Britain if the latter continued its slave trade. In 1804 Henry Brougham argued that the British slave trade was failing, that its abolition would not be harmful to the British economy, and that abolition would help to promote natural increase among the British West Indian slave population. He, too, commented on the links between the continuance of the slave trade and Haiti, noting the continuing problems of rebelliousness among African enslaved people forced across the Atlantic.[33] Edward Long would no doubt have been aware of Stephen's and Brougham's views, both of which covered the issues he raised in his letter to Mary Jervis. He would also have gathered from Wilberforce's measure and from the Society's meetings that the pro-slave trade cause was under serious pressure when he wrote to Mary Jervis, but how far that influenced what he wrote is a matter of conjecture.[34]

The letter of 6 June 1804 reflected Long's position as a major scion of the absentee plantocracy intent on preserving enslavement for the future. It focuses on three interconnected themes: the potential spread of the large-scale Saint-Domingue insurgence to Jamaica; the demographic problems of Jamaican enslavement; and whether abolition of the British slave trade should be opposed or supported. These three themes were subsumed under the umbrella of maintaining the status quo in Jamaica. The spectre of slave revolt was a particular matter of concern when Long wrote his letter, for the Republic of Haiti, with Black leadership, had a precarious hold on political power, and the Haitian army, as indicated above, had recently massacred many White French. Fear of a slave insurrection, possibly on a similar scale to that in Haiti, continued in Jamaica until emancipation occurred in 1834.[35]

As Long points out in his letter, 'the disproportion of white inhabitants to slaves' in Jamaica 'is already much too great for public safety' and 'the further importation of African blacks' could bolster any future agitation of enslaved people.[36] The disproportionate racial composition of Jamaican society was undoubtedly true: in 1750 Jamaica's enslaved population was ten times more numerous than its White inhabitants, while in 1830 it was fifteen times numerically larger.[37] The skewed ratio of White people to Black people had long been a concern. Thus an earlier commentator on Jamaica, James Knight, had written sometime between 1737 and 1746 that enslaved people far outnumbered White people in Jamaica and that the security of the White inhabitants was a central social concern.[38] Fears of slave revolts in the Caribbean were common in the late seventeenth and eighteenth centuries.[39] Long believed that harsh punishments were needed to deal with treacherous enslaved individuals involved

[31] J. Popkin, *A Concise History of the Haitian Revolution* (Chichester, 2012), p. 137.

[32] Petley, *White Fury*, pp. 178–90.

[33] J. Stephen, *The Crisis of the Sugar Colonies; or, an Enquiry Into the Objects and Probable Effects of the French Expedition to the West Indies; and Their Connection With the Colonial Interests of the British People. To Which Are Subjoined, Sketches of a Plan for Settling the Vacant Lands of Trinidada* (London, 1802), pp. 75, 82–9; J. Stephen, *The Opportunity; or, Reasons for an Immediate Alliance With St Domingo* (London, 1804), pp. 10, 146; and H. Brougham, *A Concise Statement of the Question Regarding the Abolition of the Slave Trade* (London, 1804), pp. 33–8. Stephen's and Brougham's views are assessed in J. R. Oldfield, *Transatlantic Abolitionism in the Age of Revolution: an International History of Anti-slavery, c.1787–1820* (Cambridge, 2013), pp. 166–8; and Richardson, *Principles and Agents*, pp. 237–40.

[34] The Minutes of the Society of West India Merchants and Planters listed those in attendance at their meetings. Beeston and Samuel Long attended some meetings, as noted, but whether Edward Long also attended in old age is difficult to pinpoint because the attendance lists sometimes refer to a 'Mr. Long' without giving a Christian name. As David Ryden has noted, 'It is impossible to suggest who these generic entries represent' (Ryden, *West Indian Slavery and British Abolition*, p. 59).

[35] D. Geggus, 'British opinion and the emergence of Haiti, 1791–1805', in *Slavery and British Society, 1776–1846*, ed. J. Walvin (London, 1982), p. 144; and W. A. Green, *British Slave Emancipation: the Sugar Colonies and the Great Experiment, 1830–1865* (Oxford, 1976), p. 115.

[36] See Long's letter, 6 June 1804.

[37] S. L. Engerman and B. W. Higman, 'The demographic structure of the Caribbean slave societies in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries', in *General History of the Caribbean*, iii: *The Slave Societies of the Caribbean*, ed. F. W. Knight (London, 1997), pp. 45–104, at pp. 48, 50.

[38] J. Knight, *The Natural, Moral, and Political History of Jamaica and the Territories Thereon Depending From the First Discovery of the Island by Christopher Columbus, to the Year 1746*, ed. J. P. Greene (Charlottesville, Va., 2021), p. 482.

[39] Burnard, *Jamaica in the Age of Revolution*, pp. 23–4; and M. J. Steel, 'A philosophy of fear: the world view of the Jamaican plantocracy', *Journal of Caribbean History*, xxvii (1993), 1–19.

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in mutinies and insurrections.[40] He had advocated various schemes to increase the White settlement of Jamaica, partly to improve the security of settlers, but these plans never left the drawing board.[41]

Three separate slave revolts occurred while Long lived in Jamaica, all connected to African people forced into enslavement from the Gold Coast.[42] Long had written about the role of African people, especially Coromantines/Coromantees from the Gold Coast, in 'seditions and mutinies' in Jamaica up to the publication of his *History of Jamaica*.[43] He particularly singled out the recently arrived enslaved Africans after the Jamaican authorities and the Maroons declared peace in 1739 as an important impetus for Tacky's slave revolt in Jamaica in 1760, the largest Jamaican uprising in the eighteenth century.[44] Long believed that Coromantees should be kept in subjection as enemies to the planters; he deemed them unsuitable for creolization.[45]

While still living in Jamaica, Long participated fully in the affairs of the House of Assembly.[46] He was part of a committee appointed by the Jamaica Assembly to investigate 'the rise, progress, and means used to suppress' a slave revolt in St. Mary's parish in 1765. On 6 August 1766 Long read the committee's report before the House of Assembly, drawing attention to the role of Coromantees in the insurgency: the insurrection was 'planned and conducted, almost wholly by the Coromantee slaves, whose turbulent, savage, and martial temper, is well known'. The report was largely addressed to Jamaican planters. The committee recommended that a bill be prepared to lay an additional duty on Fante, Akim, Ashante and Coromantee people forced across the Atlantic. This would amount to a ban on enslaved people brought to Jamaica from the Gold Coast, which was a favoured trade area of Africans for Jamaican planters. In the event, the Assembly did not pass such a bill, no doubt because enslaved Coromantee people were regularly purchased by planters.[47] The above discussion indicates that Long was well apprised of the connection between the African background of the enslaved people arriving in Jamaica and their propensity to revolt. He favoured excluding enslaved Coromantee people from the island.[48] In his *History of Jamaica* Long repeated this argument by suggesting that a restriction on enslaved people imported to Jamaica should be put in place for four or five years 'by laying a duty equal to a prohibition', but this never occurred.[49] After returning to live in England, Long furthered his interest in enslaved Coromantees as rebels through reading earlier printed descriptions of them.[50]

The committee report read by Long to the Jamaica House of Assembly in 1766 noted that St. Mary parish was 'in a very defenceless condition' owing to the small number of resident regular troops and the absence of the principal proprietors.[51] Long emphasized the importance of military regiments in discouraging enslaved people to revolt in Jamaica and the importance of having resident proprietors prevent insurrections breaking out.[52] Other members of the White elite associated with Jamaica were cognizant of the need for better defence and internal security in the island, such matters taking up between 60 and 70 per cent of the colonial budget after 1760.[53] Long was clearly fearful of turbulence

[40] Long, *History of Jamaica*, ii. 442–4, 447, 460–7.
[41] Burnard, *Jamaica in the Age of Revolution*, pp. 54–5.
[42] Leigh, 'Origins of a source', p. 307.
[43] The connections Long made between Coromantine slave imports and slave rebellion in Jamaica are not universally accepted; see the discussion in Burnard, *Jamaica in the Age of Revolution*, pp. 108–9. See also Leigh, 'Origins of a source'. Long's racial theories are discussed in A. J. Barker, *The African Link: British Attitudes to the Negro in the Era of the Atlantic Slave Trade, 1550–1807* (London, 1988), pp. 41–58; and S. Seth, 'Materialism, slavery, and *The History of Jamaica*', *Isis*, civ (2014), 764–72.
[44] For a recent evaluation of the role of Africans in this rebellion, see Brown, *Tacky's Revolt*. Long also wrote in a private letter to Granville Sharp about Coromantees and insurrection in Jamaica: see Brit. Libr., C. E. Long Papers, Add. MS. 18,271, fols. 39v–40r, quoted in Leigh, 'Origins of a source', p. 313 n. 4.
[45] E. Goveia, *A Study on the Historiography of the British West Indies to the End of the Nineteenth Century* (Mexico City, 1956), p. 62.
[46] Goveia, *Historiography of the British West Indies*, p. 57; and Hall, *Lucky Valley*, p. 332.
[47] Jamaica Assembly, *Journals of the House of Assembly of Jamaica, 1663–1826*, ed. A. Aikman (14 vols., St Jago de la Vega, 1811–29), v. 592–3; Leigh, 'Origins of a source', pp. 295, 307; and Long, *History of Jamaica*, ii. 445, 471. My thanks to an anonymous referee for sending these details to me. In the period 1751–75, 31.8 per cent of slaves arriving in Jamaica came from the Gold Coast, which was then the leading supply area for Africans arriving in the island; see D. Eltis, 'The volume and structure of the transatlantic slave trade: a reassessment', *William and Mary Quarterly*, lviii (2001), 17–46, at p. 46.
[48] Hall, 'Racial capitalism', p. 17.
[49] Long, *History of Jamaica*, i. 401–2.
[50] Leigh, 'Origins of a source', p. 309.
[51] *Journals of the House of Assembly of Jamaica*, v. 592.
[52] Long, *History of Jamaica*, i. 383, 389; ii. 442, 444–5 (quotation on p. 444).
[53] Hall, *Lucky Valley*, p. 332; and T. Burnard and A. Graham, 'Security, taxation and the imperial system in Jamaica, 1721–1782', *Early American Studies*, xviii (2020), 461–89.

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in Jamaica in the wake of the Saint-Domingue uprising, referring to the prospect of 'Murder, Burning & Spoliation'.[54] The closing section of his letter also pinpointed his fear of the domino effect of the successful slave revolt in Saint-Domingue, with the possibility of capitulation by the White elite in Jamaica leading to a second Black republic in the Caribbean.[55]

Long's letter also underscores his understanding of the precarious demographic situation among the enslaved people in Jamaican. Maintaining the levels of enslaved Black people in Jamaica had always been achieved by continuing enforced passage from Africa rather than through emphasis upon fertility and reproduction rates on plantations. Planters long regarded this strategy as the solution to heavy mortality among the enslaved Jamaican population. They calculated it was more profitable to depend upon the Atlantic slave trade for maintaining and increasing population levels rather than already enslaved people procreating on plantations.[56] Thus 575,000 enslaved Africans were forced into the slave trade during the eighteenth century to increase Jamaica's Black population by about 250,000.[57] In his letter to Mary Jervis, Long was open to the idea of ending the transatlantic slave trade but did not fully support that position: the 'experience of many years' had taught him it was a bad idea because, with a decrease of enslaved people, 'the properties must necessarily go to ruin, very rapidly'.[58] In his History of Jamaica, Long had observed that African people died much faster than they could reproduce.[59]

Long contributed significantly to discussions about whether natural increase could replace new arrivals of enslaved Africans to sustain Jamaica's slave population. By the turn of the nineteenth century he had long been interested in improving the fertility of the enslaved people in Jamaica in order to increase rates of natural reproduction. In his *History of Jamaica* he criticized the long-term practice whereby Jamaica's planters shipped in enslaved Africans rather than introducing policies to improve procreation among enslaved people: a shift away from direct imports from Africa would encourage reproduction and would improve Jamaica's security by cutting back on Africans who had been warriors in Africa and were inclined to rebel. Long also noted that heavy workloads caused reproductive problems for enslaved women.[60]

Long was well aware that death among enslaved people was high in eighteenth-century Jamaica. Modern research has confirmed this fact by showing that such deaths exceeded births by 3 per cent throughout that century.[61] Long's *History of Jamaica* had blamed Africans for problems of social and biological reproduction leading to low birth rates and high death rates among the enslaved population on Jamaica.[62] In his view, enslaved people newly forced to Jamaica brought with them various illnesses, including yaws and venereal complaints.[63] In a description of Lucky Valley, written in a letter to Prime Minister Pitt the Younger in 1788, he had outlined 'the diseases particularly fatal to the Negroes' and had linked these to mortality rates; his estate had recorded seventy-two deaths as opposed to thirty-seven births between 1779 and 1785. Few fertile enslaved women lived on his Clarendon sugar plantation, and he had heard of only eight Jamaican sugar estates that had sustained their population by annual births and were not 'under the necessity of buying recruits'.[64] Long extrapolated beyond the findings for his own plantation to claim that

[54] See Long's letter, 6 June 1804.

[55] The wealthy Jamaican planter Simon Taylor expressed similar views on the possible drastic effects of the Saint-Domingue slave revolt; see C. Petley, '"Devoted islands" and "that madman Wilberforce": British proslavery patriotism during the Age of Abolition', *Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History*, xxxix (2011), 393–415, at p. 402.

[56] B. W. Higman, 'Demography and family structures', in *The Cambridge World History of Slavery*, iii: *AD 1420–AD 1804*, ed. D. Eltis and S. L. Engerman (Cambridge, 2011), pp. 479–512, at p. 489.

[57] R. B. Sheridan, 'The slave trade to Jamaica, 1702–1808', in *Trade, Government and Society: Caribbean History, 1700–1920: Essays Presented to Douglas Hall*, ed. B. W. Higman (Kingston, 1983), pp. 1–16, at p. 3.

[58] See Long's letter, 6 June 1804.

[59] Long, *History of Jamaica*, iii. 432.

[60] Long, *History of Jamaica*, ii. 410, 437, 444; and Burnard, *Jamaica in the Age of Revolution*, p. 63.

[61] Hall, *Lucky Valley*, p. 137; and O. Patterson, *The Sociology of Slavery: Black Society in Jamaica, 1655–1838* (London, 1967), pp. 94–8.

[62] Hall, *Lucky Valley*, p. 136.

[63] Hall, *Lucky Valley*, p. 138; and Long, *History of Jamaica*, ii. 434.

[64] 'Edward Long describes his own estate in Jamaica, 1788', in *Slavery, Abolition and Emancipation: Black Slaves and the British Empire*, ed. M. Craton, J. Walvin and D. Wright (London, 1976), pp. 102–9, at pp. 102, 105. The original version of this transcribed document, a letter from Long to William Pitt the younger dated 7 March 1788, is in The National Archives of the U.K., Pitt Papers, PRO 30/8/153, fols. 40–4 (which is wrongly cited in the book just mentioned). See also M. Craton, *Empire, Enslavement and Freedom in the Caribbean* (Kingston, 1997), p. 176.

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natural increase occurred only on one-seventieth of about 1,000 estates.[65] As for the purchase of newly enslaved people from Africa, Long's *History of Jamaica* argued that population increase characterized the African communities from which the enslaved people were captured and that this justified their removal.[66] His letter to Pitt argued for the continuation of the slave trade just at the time when abolitionist findings were first being presented to parliament.[67]

Long's letter to Mary Jervis repeats his perception that diseases and occasional droughts would always afflict the enslaved Jamaican population and lead to mortality even if they were managed in a mild, humane manner. This would have a calamitous effect on sugar properties. It is likely that voluntary ameliorative measures were already producing improved productivity among the enslaved workforce when Long wrote his letter in 1804. Many of the clauses in Jamaica's Consolidated Slave Act (1781), which was renewed and improved in 1787, 1788 and 1792, sought to improve the conditions under which the enslaved laboured. Planters no doubt supported these laws because they realized that improving conditions would lead to better reproduction and longer life spans for their Black workforce.[68] In addition, the Jamaica Assembly passed laws in the late 1780s to ensure the cultivation of ground provisions.[69] Long must have been aware that this was happening, though evidence appears to be lacking on how extensively amelioration was then put into practice in Jamaica.[70] Long knew that reform of the slave trade was part of both the proslavery and abolitionist view of amelioration; that the demographic performance of Jamaica's enslaved population was central to debates over the abolition of the British slave trade; and that the main suggestions put forward for improving the reproductive and survival rates of enslaved people in the Caribbean were related to the introduction of ameliorative measures.[71] Interestingly, the preambles to the acts referred to in the above paragraph include clauses emphasizing the need to improve reproductive rates to preserve the labour force and maintain agricultural output.[72]

By the late 1780s some planters already emphasized the greater productivity and longevity in the British Caribbean of enslaved creole people compared with African people forced into transatlantic passage.[73] Planters believed that creolization combined with amelioration served as an antidote to slave uprisings.[74] Over the whole period from 1790 to 1807, abolitionists and colonial legislators who repeatedly connected amelioration and creolization as a route to abolition and abolitionists cited Long as their main authority for linking creolization with internal security.[75] Long's position on the abolition of the slave trade needs to be placed in context here. As Claudius K. Fergus succinctly summarizes it, 'Long did not explicitly call for abolition but surmised that creolisation was the only antidote to insurrection'.[76]

In his description of his own estate in 1788, Long fully supported the continuance of the slave trade and set down eight bad consequences that would occur if it was terminated. They are as follows:

> Propertied men, in the event of abolition, would transfer their capital from Jamaica to another colony.
> Abolition would take away from Jamaica one of its chief resources for paying to support British troops on the island.

[65] 'Edward Long describes his own estate', p. 102.
[66] Hall, *Lucky Valley*, p. 139; and Long, *History of Jamaica*, ii. 387.
[67] 'Edward Long describes his own estate', pp. 102–5.
[68] H. Cateau, 'Things fall apart: abolition, the slave trade and enslavement', *The Arts Journal*, iii, nos. 1–2 (2007), 105–20, at p. 108.
[69] M. Craton, 'Jamaican slave mortality: fresh light from Worthy Park, Longville and Tharp estates', *Journal of Caribbean History*, i (1971), 1–27, at p. 18.
[70] For plentiful material on amelioration, see two publications by J. R. Ward: *British West Indian Slavery: the Process of Amelioration, 1750–1834* (Oxford, 1988); and 'The amelioration of British West Indian slavery: anthropometric evidence', *Economic History Review*, cxxi (2018), 1199–226. However, neither of these careful studies has material that indicates the extent of slave amelioration in Jamaica by 1804; much of the evidence on improvements to the life and work of the enslaved comes from the 1820s.
[71] C. Dierksheide, *Amelioration and Empire: Progress and Slavery in the Plantation Americas* (Charlottesville, Va., 2014), p. 180; and D. Richardson, 'The ending of the British slave trade in 1807: the economic context', in *The British Slave Trade: Abolition, Parliament and People*, ed. S. Farrell, M. Unwin and J. Walvin (Edinburgh, 2007), pp. 127–40, at pp. 133–4.
[72] Cateau, 'Things fall apart,' p. 111.
[73] Richardson, 'Ending of the British slave trade', p. 138.
[74] C. K. Fergus, *Revolutionary Emancipation: Slavery and Abolitionism in the British West Indies* (Baton Rouge, 2013), p. 38.
[75] Fergus, *Revolutionary Emancipation*, p. 41; and C. Fergus, '"Dread of insurrection": abolitionism, security, and labor in Britain's West Indian colonies, 1760–1823', *William and Mary Quarterly*, lxvi (2009), 757–80, at p. 761.
[76] Fergus, *Revolutionary Emancipation*, p. 39.

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It would probably discourage a further extension of sugar cultivation in Jamaica.
It would raise the value of slaves in Jamaica but depress the value of land.
It would infringe annuity contracts and testamentary trusts subject to legal penalties that required the introduction of a certain number of slaves annually.
It would affect mortgages by rendering land of little value.
There would be the possibility of discontent on the part of slaves through the extra labour that would fall upon them.
Finally, properties with a dwindling labour supply would decline rapidly. This line of reasoning offered many reasons for Long to support his pro-slave trade stance.[77]

Long's articulation in 1788 of the potential deleterious effects of ending the slave trade appear to cover the resultant problems for planters such as himself conclusively. What is notable in his letter of 1804, however, is that several conclusions could be drawn from Long's complex ideas. Thus he argued that he would wish 'an entire stop to further importations'[78] if improvements could be made to the prevalence of diseases leading to slave mortality. He also suggested that slave trade abolition would induce planters to promote 'inducements of positive necessity'[79] by focusing on attempts to improve the health of enslaved people and the rearing of enslaved infants to maturity after the enforced passage of Africans had been legally closed. Long's ideas could either be seen as a sophisticated approach about what should happen to the slave trade when it was under prolonged abolitionist pressure or as an expression of self-interest, indicating perhaps his confidence that his estate managers could implement amelioration successfully and this would place him in a competitive position in terms of productivity in relation to other people's estates. It may be that he was still trying to resolve these two positions in his own mind. It is impossible to extend the discussion onto a more concrete footing because there is no other written documentation extending Long's thoughts in relation to the final years of the slave trade to Jamaica. In addition, no information survives about the situation on his own plantations in or around 1804 to enable us to explore the matter further.

Nevertheless, the letter of 1804 indicates that Long believed that ending the slave trade could be accepted on the basis that it would impel planters to improve their attempts at amelioration but that, in actuality, the enforced passage of enslaved people from Guinea was still necessary because of continuing slave mortality in Jamaica.[80] How far Long was influenced in his changing views on the slave trade by colonial administrators is unknown, but it is interesting that, also in 1804, Edward Cooke, undersecretary for the war and colonial office, also expressed the view that ending the slave trade would force planters to treat their enslaved workers better.[81]

It is possible, though not confirmed, that Long had modified his views on the slave trade through consideration of changing views on the subject held by some principal members of the West India Interest. By early 1804 those who held property in the 'old' West Indies, notably Jamaica, were worried about the rising British investment in the 'new' West Indies acquired by Britain from the Dutch in the Napoleonic wars, especially Demerara, Berbice and Surinam. Those with estates in 'old' territories favoured suspending the slave trade so that they were not ruined by the growth of sugar production, based on the enforced passage of Africans in the 'new' territories. However, this suggestion should not be pressed too far because on 17 May 1804 a meeting of the West India Interest at the London tavern rejected the proposal of suspending the slave trade during the current war.[82]

At the conclusion of his letter of 1804, Long admitted he might be mistaken in his current views about how the Jamaican plantocracy should respond to a possible termination of the slave trade. At the time ameliorative measures were improving labour productivity in Jamaica, though no official parliamentary policy on amelioration occurred until 1823.[83] Long thought in 1804 that planter

77 'Edward Long describes his own estate', pp. 107–8.
78 See Long's letter, 6 June 1804.
79 See Long's letter, 6 June 1804.
80 Leigh, 'Origins of a source', p. 296 (quotation).
81 Petley, 'Slaveholders and revolution', p. 69.
82 R. I. Wilberforce and S. Wilberforce, *The Life of William Wilberforce* (3 vols., London, 1839), iii. 164–6.
83 Ward, *British West Indian Slavery*, pp. 190, 192–4.

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concentration on amelioration could obviate attachment to the continuance of the slave trade. Ultimately, for Long any alterations to the treatment of enslaved people and whether the slave trade should be continued were still open for debate but would be decided by fears for the security of property and the possibility of Jamaica succumbing to a slave revolt on the scale of the Saint-Domingue/Haiti rebellion. Thus the future internal peace and prosperity of Jamaica trumped different plans for dealing with the slave trade as Long saw it. British abolitionists at the time Long wrote his letter were pressing home the need to abolish the slave trade in order to preserve the internal security of British colonies in the Caribbean.[84] Though abolitionists argued more directly for ending the slave trade than Long, the thrust of Long's letter of 1804 was to emphasize that, in circumstances where slave revolt and Jamaica's security were concerned, the pro-slave trade argument would need to be shelved, the implementation of slave trade abolition would be acceptable and planters could then concentrate their energies on further efforts to promote amelioration.

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[84] Fergus, '"Dread of insurrection"', p. 772.