

Nomination form International Memory of the World Register

The West India Committee Collection

ID Code [2014-42]

1.0 Summary (max 200 words)

The West India Committee(WIC) collection is a unique documentary heritage crucial to the comprehension of the Transatlantic Slave Trade, providing insight into many unacknowledged innovations, institutions and inventions derived directly from the trade. Founded in London in 1735, the WIC is the only remaining British institution of its kind. Its archival collection enhances the historiography and general understanding of the contribution made by West Indians to the development of the global economy, and civil society. The collection includes documentation and artefacts relating to the:

- 1) FOUNDING OF THE FIRST POLICE FORCE IN THE WORLD (1798) providing the 'blue print' for police forces worldwide;
- 2) BOUNTY EXPEDITION (1787) established to introduce the breadfruit into the Caribbean, one of the first examples of a constructive partnership between commerce and science;
- 3) DISCOVERY AND COLONIAL SETTLEMENT OF PITCAIRNS AND FIJI;
- 4) WEST INDIA QUAY (1802), London's first purpose built dock and the then longest brick building in world at over one mile in length.

This material is a unique, eloquent, irreplaceable record providing new perspectives on a mutual heritage shared by over 30 countries. It is of international significance as the counterpart of collections in the Memory of the World Register amongst others, showing a new perspective on the global influence of the Caribbean.

2.1 Name of nominator (person or organization)

THE WEST INDIA COMMITTEE
THE CROWN AGENTS
THE MUSEUM OF LONDON
THE THAMES POLICE ASSOCIATION
THE ROYAL MUSEUMS GREENWICH
THE NATIONAL ARCHIVES
MONTSERRAT NATIONAL TRUST
THE GOVERNMENT OF ANGUILLA
THE JAMAICAN DEFENCE FORCE
MUSEUM OF ANTIGUA AND BARBUDA

2.2 Relationship to the nominated documentary heritage

The West India Committee is the institution that commissioned the initiatives and events to which the documentation pertains. A significant portion of the documentation was created for and on behalf of the West India Committee. The remaining nominators are the owners and curators of their respective portions of the West India Committee collection.

2.3 Contact person(s) (to provide information on nomination)

MRS BLONDEL CLUFF

2.4 Contact details

<i>Name</i>	<i>Address</i>	
BLONDEL CLUFF	WEST INDIA COMMITTEE, HOPE HOUSE, 45 GREAT PETER STREET, LONDON, SW1P 3LT	
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3.0 Identity and description of the documentary heritage

3.1 Name and identification details of the items being nominated

If inscribed, the exact title and institution(s) to appear on the certificate should be given

The WIC-Collection for the purpose of this nomination refers to all those documentary records and related artefacts generated or acquired by the West India Committee, its members and associates, or presented to the WIC by its members, administrators, governments, institutions and individuals relating to the administration, development and management of the Caribbean and Bermuda. These holdings span the period from the formal inception of operations of the WIC (1750) covering the period of its most active period of engagement in operations and strategic developments of the indicated associated bodies and organs (1750 – 1840), until the subsequent distribution and permanent loan of these archival holdings to the respective identified entities. These incorporate the records and deposits of: The West India Committee, The Crown Agents, the West India Dock Company and East & West India Dock Company, The Thames Police Association, and the documents relating to the specified voyages of the HMS Bounty and HMS Providence and the associated discovery of the Pitcairns and Fiji Islands.

The documentation proposed for inscription includes various profound milestones, (some of which continue to benefit the world at large today), together with the business practices of WIC and its founding members for over 230 years. It takes the form of certificates, documentation, minutes, records, plans, maps, pictures and photos. Each holding is limited to those materials that have been assigned a unique catalogue identification number by each entity's archival or curatorial staff as indicated.

3.4 History/provenance

The West India Committee was founded in 1735 in London to promote Britain's commercial interests in the Caribbean. This body was originally a reluctant collaboration between the British based sugar merchants and planters, the West Indian Committee of Planters and Merchants. The Committee later became the West India Committee, at one time boasting over 40 members of the British parliament. As such it was one of the earliest and more influential lobby groups which was crucial to the determination of British policies in relation to the abolition of the slave trade, emancipation of slaves, policing of the abolition legislation globally, asylum of non-British slaves, trade in tropical staples, port and dock construction and management, and governance of British Caribbean territories.

The documentation was composed by or on behalf of the West India Committee and/or the institutions with which it collaborated to achieve these historic developments. It is largely contemporaneous with the events it records. For over two centuries WIC has been responsible for milestones in the development of the Caribbean and the world at large.

4.0 Legal information

4.1 Owner of the documentary heritage (name and contact details)

Name	Address
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Refer to Schedule 1 attached

Telephone	Refer to Schedule 1	Facsimile
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attached hereto

4.2 Custodian of the documentary heritage (name and contact details if different from the owner)

Name	Address
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Refer to Schedule 2 attached hereto

Telephone	Facsimile	Email
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Refer to Schedule 2 attached hereto

4.3 Legal status

Absolute title to the collection is owned by the respective nominators, with the exception of those held by the Museum of London, whose material belongs to The Port of London Authority. The Museum does, however have legal and administrative responsibility for the preservation of the documentation.

4.4 Accessibility

Describe how the item(s) / collection may be accessed

The records are all open to the public. In the case of each of the holders of our records opening times and admission fees (where charged) are publicised accordingly.

All access restrictions should be explicitly stated below:

It is the aim of the West India Committee to make all our records more easily accessible to the public through digitalization. We have succeeded in securing support from Google who have offered to digitize the records at no cost to the charity. In case of certain custodians such as the Royal Museums Greenwich, digitalization Has already been completed.

4.5 Copyright status

Describe the copyright status of the item(s) / collection

For early material within the collections there are no copyright restrictions. For the more recent material within the last 75 years the copyright resides with the West India Committee as the author of this material and permission is hereby granted to UNESCO to utilize such material without restriction for the purposes of inscription of such material as a Memory of the World as herein defined. Permission is also granted in the attached Agreement Granting Non-Exclusive Rights.

5.0 Assessment against the selection criteria

5.1 Authenticity.

The WIC collection has remained intact and has been maintained within the custody of the originating body since its inception and on an ongoing basis for more than 200 years, where it has periodically been documented and organized according to the Committee's requirements. Moreover, the collection has invariably passed directly from the West India Committee, or the institutions that have created it upon their behalf, directly into the hands of the current curators without external interference or involvement. This has been reliably established by the respective curators and owners of the collection, each of which is an internationally recognized institution that has compiled the inventories and catalogues of the collection.

5.2 World significance

The papers and documents within the WIC collection represent an irreplaceable and unique set of primary source materials of extraordinary richness with relevance to the study of history, politics and the social and economic conditions not only of the Caribbean region, but in addition the Pacific region and Great Britain. These archives make it possible to investigate and interrogate the interrelationships

of regions, peoples, science, trade, and government through a history of the idea of colonizing imperial natural resources for national, economic, social and professional gain. The innovation and rationalization of such resource management, required improvements in the efficiency of transportation/transshipment and security of the products of Empire. The WIC collection elucidates the evidentiary chain of thought and experience which indelibly links these developments in what is in effect a 'world history' which has the capacity to explain the origins of how we live and think today in terms of processes which operated over several centuries, and through all the continents of human experience. The scope and breadth of the varied holdings of this global institution provides essential insight into the pioneering processes, people and production required for such an enterprise, and as such affords huge potential for the reconsideration, reinterpretation and reconnection of contemporary communities and institutions through their mutual heritage and experience.

5.3 Comparative criteria:

Does the heritage meet any of the following tests? (It must meet at least one of them.)

1 Time

Set against a backdrop of world events during the past 264 years including the French Revolution, American War of Independence, the Transatlantic Slave Trade, the Industrial Revolution and the various world conflicts the documentation is clearly evocative of its time. It also reflects times of crisis within the Caribbean including incidents of slave revolt and their effect upon the people both in the capital and in the colonies. It illustrates how the West India Committee evolved over time from a trade association operating during the morally onerous economic environment of slavery to become one of the leading charities whose object is to improve the general welfare of the Caribbean and its peoples globally and which is responsible for supporting many milestones in the development and improvement of the region.

The West India Committee's Bounty expedition of 1787 led to the discovery of both Pitcairns and Fiji by the western world, and its subsequent Providence voyage [also introduced newly discovered plant species such as the breadfruit from the Pacific to the Caribbean and Africa.

The Thames Police (London) was the first professional police force established in the world. The model devised in 1798 by the West India Committee to combat looting and corruption in the Port of London as the entrepot for the storage and transshipment of such products of Empire. became the 'blue print' for police forces throughout the world, marking the first such form of protection for civil society.

The launching of the West India Dock Company was an enormous undertaking at a time of wartime austerity. In terms of dock-building, nothing of a comparable scale had been undertaken in the western world. There was no foreign or domestic precedent for the construction of such a large-scale system of wet docks when it was started in 1802. The segregation of import and export facilities for the purposes of control of excise was similarly unprecedented.

2 Place

Whilst the documentation of the West India Committee evinces the practices and politics of the Slave economy which transformed the 'plantationed' Caribbean prevailing at the end of the eighteenth and beginning of the nineteenth centuries, particularly in terms of the distribution and propagation of new plants, crops and food supplies, the collection is distinguished from all other currently inscribed Caribbean collections, in that it provides crucial information on the unacknowledged achievements of the West Indian community within the London landscape

during the same period.

An example is the previously unacknowledged mutual heritage of the West Indian Community and the Police in London, whose creation provided the model for the establishment of police constabularies throughout the British empire in Africa, Asia, the Pacific, the Americas and the Caribbean by the end of the 19th century. Equally significant was the design and construction of the West India Quay in 1802 by the West India Dock Company, as this ultimately gave rise to the world renowned Port Of London, being the first and the longest purpose built dock and warehouse structure of its kind in the city. These structures transformed Britain's architectural landscape and its security and customs systems.

3 People

The West India Committee comprised some of the most prominent British businessmen and politicians of 18th Century. Involvement in the slave trade was commonplace at the time and their involvement in the institution is well documented and inscribed in the UNESCO Memory of the World Register in the Eric Williams Library that contains early records of the West India Committee which evidence the impact of such enterprises on enslaved persons of both African and West Indian descent. This documentation reflects the level of acceptance of commercial practices of the time that are now regarded as inhumane and politically incorrect. It tracks the debates and settlements reached at the end of that era of commerce and how the business community adjusted accordingly. It also illustrates how the West India Committee advanced and developed over two centuries from its early origins to become one of the leading charitable institutions that address the needs of the Caribbean.

The collection is extremely important in that it also focuses upon the little known and unacknowledged innovations and developments that depict the entrepreneurial spirit of the Plantocracy in the context of their homeland, Britain. This further assists in the interpretation of the era.

Joseph Banks, Fellow and influential President of the Royal Society and Director of the Royal Botanical Gardens, Kew, was one of Britain's leading botanists who sailed with Captain Cook, 'discovered' the Breadfruit, and was responsible for organising the 1787 Bounty expedition (and the later 1791 Providence expedition) sponsored by the West India Committee. He was subsequently responsible for the strategic deployment of many of the nations devoted botanists and scientists within the increasingly influential and important network of botanical stations and gardens which he nurtured through his linkages between Kew, the Caribbean and the Empire.

Captain Bligh, Vice Admiral of the Blue was the officer of the British Royal Navy commissioned to undertake the expedition to introduce the Breadfruit to the Caribbean. He was honourably acquitted at the court-martial inquiring into the famous mutiny on the Bounty. This famous incident in British naval history arguably marked a sea change in the disciplinary practices within the British Navy.

Pappo the Otaheitian, as described in his friend James Wiles memorial, had traded with the crew of the HMS Bounty, acquiring a favourite blue sailor's coat (and the nickname 'Jackets') before making the choice to once again interact the British, stowing away with another Tahitian Mididda, and travelling aboard the Providence to the Caribbean. Pappo's willingness to engage with the British, his acknowledged status as fearless warrior, as well as his knowledge of the breadfruit and other Tahitian plants, secured him safe passage on Capt. Bligh's ship following his discovery. Bligh was confident that Pappo would "...be the means of the Breadfruit being brought early into use, & on that account his life is valuable to Jamaica". Pappo's transferral of botanist's skills facilitated an empire-wide network of knowledge through the system of botanical stations located

in Caribbean, as well as the wider Empire, and centred at Kew in London. He later died in Jamaica following an inoculation against smallpox, in dedicated service to the care of the plants.

Alexander Anderson, rode the wave of Europe's 18th century concern with economic botany, facilitated by Linnaeus' system of classification and a growing body of botanical knowledge. As botanist and Director of the St. Vincent Botanical Station, he received in 1793 a cargo of 1300 Tahitian plants, along with their devoted Tahitian caretakers, Pappo and Mididda. Respecting their skills and relying on available local knowledge, Anderson ensured the successful transplantation and propagation of the breadfruit trees within the Caribbean landscape, and their eventual distribution throughout the islands. His words and actions demonstrated a commitment to environmentalism following "the footsteps of nature" and ensuring sustainable use of the land in which he collected and exchanged both seeds, plants and information, both within the region and beyond.

Robert Milligan, a prominent West Indian merchant, in collaboration with the Jamaican planter George Hibbert, established the West India Dock Company that was responsible for the construction of London's first purpose built dock, West India Quay, under the West India Dock Act 1799. In creating the dock system new forms of architectural and construction methods were adopted, and new construction materials were introduced. The desire to create a safe and efficient docking system also gave rise to the invention of the police.

Robert Harriot and Patrick Colquhoun the two magistrates who created the police on behalf of the West India Committee in 1798 as the first preventative and detection institution of its kind in the world and which marked a fundamental sea change in the structure of society. It provided a means whereby the parameters of civil society could be established and order maintained within it. It was a significant development in society of global significance whereby the state first actively imposed order upon the behaviour and conduct of civil society by official force.

4 Subject and theme

The ideology of policing as it evolved within the hands of the West India Committee from its inception in 1798 to 1839 illustrates a move from the protection of private commercial interests to the more general protection of individuals and property both state and privately owned by an institution that was fully authorised by the state.

The 18th century as the age of gardens and gardeners provided fertile ground for the emergence of new ideals about agricultural improvements that fuelled notions of 'economic botany' which attracted the investment of the West India Committee. The importance of botanical gardens in the tropical island colonies as centres for the study of environmental relationships, introductions, and decline or extinction of species was demonstrable, especially with the emergence of new theories of environmental change and conservation.

The West India Committee also sought to use sport to illustrate the recovery of Caribbean society in the post slavery era. This was achieved greatly in the sport of Cricket, when the one of the first multi racial sports teams was assembled and toured Britain in 1900 and later in 1906, managed by Lord Hawkes one of Britain's leading Cricketer, and supported by the West India Committee.

5 Form and style

Not applicable

6 Social/ spiritual/ community significance:

The documentation of the West India Committee has an irreducible emotional hold on all West Indians insofar as it relates to their pivotal role in the Abolition of Slavery and the Emancipation of Slaves . In addition the powerful, poignant, hidden mutual heritage that evolved between West Indians and the known world through the auspices of policing adds to the huge significance this material has to the global West Indian community, who have for decades struggled and suffered from an inadequate relationship with the Police Force - an institution which they themselves created and with whom they share a long and historic heritage. Early police forces in Britain were multi racial, adopting a standard of equality absent in wider society. The spiritual impact that this knowledge, awareness and appreciation may have should not be underestimated after generations of emotionally charged negative interaction between the police and the Caribbean community in Britain. The significance to community relation is therefore gargantuan.

6.0 Contextual information

6.1 Rarity

The West India Committee collection, like the institution itself, is rare. The WIC Collection here nominated bears little more than a passing resemblance to those holdings of either the Danish or Dutch West India Companies already inscribed. Due to the continued tendency to suppress important and relevant facts that may serve to provide a better comprehension of this important era in global development, this material has for some considerable time been deliberately concealed from the public. The collection largely relates to the social, charitable, commercial and civil achievements of the plantocracy. Whilst the suppression of this information may, arguably, be morally justified, it has meant that little effort has been put into the presentation of an unbiased exploration of the plantocracy nor the impact they have had on the wider world. The West India Committee is a rare survivor from the era of abolition, and emancipation. It is rare to find material such as the West India Committee collection, depicting civil innovations that have and continue to impact upon the world positively, but whose direct link to the West Indies remains deliberately unrecognised and is still unacknowledged today.

6.2 Integrity

The integrity of the archives is intact, largely due to the fact that there has been little exposure to the public to date, although the collection is available during normal business hours. The collection is uncompromised, being retained by the West India Committee and the institutions that have been established by WIC or have worked on its behalf. The material has then been transferred directly to the curators of today, each of which is world-renowned.
