of continental drift, and they discovered that in the regions where the tectronic plates of the Earth's crust overlap, stress areas are formed, where a higher than normal incidence of volcanic activity takes place. Subterranean ridges are formed in the stress areas on ocean beds and chains of volcanos rise above the surface of the sea, but in many cases their summits remain some distance below sea level.

It is these underwater volcanos, or 'seamounts' as they have been named, which collect coral on their summits and ridges, due to the comparative shallowness of the water above them. The coral slowly builds up until it reaches surface level. It is believed that at this stage the central lagoon is formed, being etched out of the coral by tidal action. Sparse vegetation grows, which attracts myriads of seabirds. The birds fertilize the ground, laying down rich phosphate deposite, and this causes the vegetation to rapidly increase. Conditions therefore become unfavorable for the seabirds and their population drops drastically. Storm action, over hundreds of years, then builds up deposits of sand on the land, causing the vegetation to become sparse once more. The seabirds return and so the cycle continues. In time, the island land level rises by a few feet and the cycle is broken, sand is unable to clog the vegetation, which then turns to jungle. Due to the base amount of decaying matter in this jungle, it is self-fertilizing and thus self perpetuating. A bore taken through the various layers of soil on an atoll will prove this cycle. This first layer consists of organic matter, the second sand and the third quano. This pattern repeats itself in succeeding layers. It is very difficult to establish the age of any atoll by these means, however, because of the possibility that early strata of sub-soil may have been washed away by exceptionally heavy seas.

It is not known how long the process of atoll formation takes, but it is certainly in the order of tens of millions of years and is a process that continues to this day. Atolls in various stages of evolution can be found in both the Pacific and Indian Oceans. Diego Garcia itself is slowly, imperceptibly changing its appearance due to the continuing action of the elements, but any differences would take thousands of years to become apparent.

It is believed that the Great Chagos Bank was once a large atoll, becoming innundated at the end of the last ice age, due to the increase in water level throughout the oceans caused by the rapidly melting ice-caps. There is evidence that many other shallow areas in mid-ocean may have been caused in the same way. The highest points of the Great Chagos Bank still exist as small islands, namely the Three Brothers, Nelson Island, Danger Island and Eagle Island. Diego Garcia is separated from the bank by a deep water channel and was never part of it, although it forms part of the same volcanic ridge.

However, the purpose of this book is to trace events on the island during the last five hundred years, during which time, the human being has played a part in its history. The story of Diego Garcia has been brief, but fascinating and despite the fact that many people have never heard of the island, it has nevertheless played a small, but important part in world affairs.

Chapter Three THE FIRST BRITISH SETTLEMENT

In 1784, the British again started to take an interest in the Indian Ocean, the burden of events nearer home having eased somewhat. Merchant ships started to appear more frequently in the area. The French too, although on a lesser scale, started to expand their influence again. By the end of 1785, trading and exploration in the region were almost back to their pre-war levels.

It was in that year, that the East India Company Board of Control in London, which was headed by Henry Dundas, began to take a greater interest in the islands of the Indian Ocean. They considered that bases might be needed in the area in case war should breakout again in Franch, for because of economic difficulties throughout Eurpoe, both sides would rely heavily on their overseas possessions for supplies. They would therefore station warships aboard with which to protect their sea routes. Diego Garcia was one of the islands under consideration, for the Board of Control had examined many old charts and reports about the island and were impressed with the capabilities of the harbor. They had read Captain Sheriff's report of 1774 and wanted to know whether Diego Garcia could be easily fortified and defended. If this were possible, the island could be used as a base for warships, in addition to vessels sent to check on French activities at Mauritius.

Accordingly, the Bombay Government was instructed to send two small vessels to take possession of Diego Garcia, and "occupy" the island. The Board of Control required an exact survey of the island and harbor and a detailed report on possible food supplies there. They also ordered that the officers, to be chosen from the Bombay Marine, were to be "competent marine surveyors and were to examine and ascertain the situation of the numerous Banks and Islands in that

part of the sea, as an accurate knowledge of these hitherto neglected Seas is essential to the Security and Navigation of the Company's Ships". A number of chronometers and lunar observation tables were sent out to be used by the surveyors.

It is not certain whether the Bombay Government were simply over-anxious to oblige, or whether they misinterprited the word "occupy" given in the instructions. In any event, they began to prepare an expedition which, although grand in scale, was to suffer throughout from disorganized and inefficient planning. The two ships became eight, six of them carrying nothing by topsoil with which to grow cereals and vegetables. There was not enough food to go around and building supplies were non-existent. Even the chronometers sent out for their use had either been lost or stolen.

The Governor of Bombay, Rawson Hart Boddam, personally selected the leaders of the expedition. As leader of the settlement partly he picked a civilian, Richard Thomas Price. Price was to be in command of four officers, forty-one craftsmen and sixty-nine servants. Military command was given to Captain John Sartorius of the Engineers, who was considered "a man of good sense and sound judgement, as well as an excellent officer". Sartorius was to be in charge of all land and marine surveys. He had under his command eight officers and 155 soldiers, mainly Sepoys and Lascars.

The Governor selected the Bombay Marine officers from "those Gentlemen in the Marine, who have established any talents for surveying, drawing and nautical observations". Lieutenant Archibald Blair was appointed in charge of the marine surveys under the direction of Sartorius, and his assistant was Lieutenant John Wales, who later became the first Marine Surveyor General of India.

Prior to sailing, Price was given detailed instructions by the governor.

He was to be the only person to know the destination of the expedition and was not to allow any surveys or reports to be forwarded to anywhere but Bombay. After the vessels had sailed, the newspapers could only report that they had left for an unknown destination, where a colony was to be established. It was feared that any leakage of information might alarm the French, who would then send warships to intercept the expedition.

Price was informed that the English had "discovered" Diego Garcia in 1712 and that this fact had been acknowledged by the French hydrographer, M. l'Apres de Mannervillette, in 1775. Price was not to allow "any straggling French, who may accidently be there without authority, or any settlement of that nature, or any post or pillar or such trifling mark of possession (left there with an evil design to restrict other Nations profiting from the situation)". prevent him from occupying the island. If, however, the French had settled in larg , he was to return to Bombay for further advice, having first sent a t s , via the Cape of Good Hope to inform the Board of Control of any s ccupation. If any foreign vessel was to visit the island, they were e treated civilly, but were not to be allowed to enter the harbor.

The expedition arrived safely at Diego Garcia in April, 1786. Great care had to be taken upon entering the harbor, because of a number of shoals in the principle entrance. All the men and stores were landed immediately and the construction of barracks and a warehouse was begun. The French settlers, who had been on the island since around 1776, were forced to leave, and departed, for Mauritius to inform the governor of the British actions.

Captain Sartorius soon issued his preliminary instructions to Lt. Blaire. He was first to examine the harbor, and secondly to begin a careful survey of the coast of the island. The work was then to be extended to other islands in the vicinity.

Soon after the expedition had landed, the first known shipwreck occurred on the island. The ship, the "Atlas", carrying hydrographer Captain James Horsburgh, was sailing close to Diego Garcia on 30 May 1786. Horsburgh later explained "The charts on board were very erroneous in the delineation of the Chagos Islands and Banks, and the commander, trusting too much to dead reckoning, was steering with confidence to make the non-existent Adu or Candu for a new departure, being their longitude nearly, by account, and bound for Ceylon; but, unfortunately, a cloud over Diego Garcia prevented the helmsman from discening it, (the officer of the watch being asleep), till we were on the reef close to the shore, the masts, rudder, and everything above the deck, went with the first surge; the second lifted the vessel over the outer rocks and threw her in toward the beach".

The many survivors from the "Atlas" added to the many difficulties that the expedition had to face. The extra men caused overcrowding in the accommodations and seriously depleted the food supplies. Although the climate proved, luckily, to be healthy, there was an absence of building materials on the island, and so construction soon came to a halt. Price believed that the island would be incapable of providing support for ships in the area, because no foodstuffs seemed to grow there. Earlier attempts by the French to introduce crops had failed, and the six ship-loads of soil, transported to the island by the expedition, either because of the effects of rain, or erosion were already dissipating into the coral. There was no trace of the sheep, goats and pigs landed by Captain Sheriff in 1774, or of any animals landed previous to that time.

During the first three months of the settlement, there appears to have been disagreements between Price and Sartorius over the time allotted to the

surveys. Price had been instructed by Bombay to have them finished within a month of arrival. This seems to have been typical of survey instructions issued by the Bombay Marine. They appeared to have no idea of the difficulties involved and the amount of time required to produce accurate charts. Sartorius protested that the Bombay Government might abandon or occupy the island on the basis of these surveys and so they needed to be as accurate as possible. It seems that Sartorius had his way, for the 'Admiral Hughes', sent to collect the survey reports, was delayed at the island for a number of weeks before they were completed to Sartorius' satisfaction.

In July, 1786, the 'Admiral Hughes' arrived back in Bombay with the reports from Price, Sartorius and Blair. All the reports were unfavourable. Blair had discovered that Diego Garcia was unsuitable for large vessels, due to the partial blockage of the only usable entrance by large shoals and coral heads. He also found that the harbour had another disadvantage. It was almost impossible to leave during the southwest monsoons due to the difficulty of tacking through the entrance. Sartorius claimed that the lack of any proper building materials, plus the extreme lowness of the island would make it impossible to fortify. It would be difficult to maintain a garrison, because all the food would have to come from Bombay.

The Bombay Government considered the reports. They felt that the Board of Control would never consider a settlement that offered no apparent advantages and couldn't be defended, except at enormous expense. And so, cautiously this time, they decided to reduce the settlement. The orders to this effect being carried to Diego Garcia on the 'Bombay', commanded by Captain James Sutherland.

At about this time, reports concerning the settlement that had reached the Governor-General in Bengal and also the Court of Directors in London. Both

Nevertheless, the Court of Directors still felt that Diego Garcia had strategic importance, and they approved its use as a base for further surveys. A detailed knowledge of the seas and currents in the area were considered essential. The Bombay Government were instructed to continue surveying the region.

The French settlers who had been forced to leave Diego Garcia by Price, had by this time reached Mauritius, and had informed the governor of what was happening. He sent letters of protest to Bombay and London, and dispatched the frigate 'Minerve' to Diego Garcia to remove the British. However, when the 'Minerve' reached the island, the British had already left.

While the troops were being evacuated, and during the voyage back to India, Lt. Blair continued his surveys and managed to establish the extent and comparative positions of nearly all the islands in the archipelago. He had established that Adu and Candu did not exist, and was able to produce a reasonably accurate chart of the region, despite the rather primitive methods he had been forced to use. Although another set of chronometers had been sent to Bombay for this survey, they were never given to Blair. He was obliged to rely on observations of lunar distances to determine longitudes. Nevertheless, he successfully completed the first general survey of the Chagos Archipelago, and although he had worked throughout with the minimum of instruments, his charts were sufficiently accurate for navigators to use, and were far more accurate than any charts previously published. In addition to his work in the Chagos Archipelago, Blair was also able to determine the extent of the Maldive Islands and collect information on the currents there. He did this while ferrying troops back to Bombay from Diego Garcia.

The expedition arrived back in Bombay early in 1787, beaten by the island.

although not by the French. Diego Garcia wasn't deserted for long however, for it was around this time that the French settlers started returning. The 'Minerve' had left a 'stone of ownership' on the island, proclaiming the possession of Diego Garcia by France, and the settlers seemed intent on backing up this claim, for they brought with them new ideas for the island, and a new sense of purpose for themselves. The era of the plantations was about to begin.

Chapter Four THE EARLY ESTABLISHMENTS

One result of the recent war between Britain and France was an economic depression, from which both countries, together with their smaller overseas possessions suffered. Mauritius, in particular, was badly hit. Many basic commodities were in short supply and prices were rising rapidly. The island relied on imports from places such as India for much of its needs and, to a certain extent, the British traders on the sub-continent were able to hold the Mauritians to ransom. One particular item which was in short supply was coconut oil, which was widely used as fuel for lamps and stoves. There were very few coconuts grown in Mauritius at the time.

Accordingly, in 1787, the governor of Mauritius, Vicomte de Souillac, decided to explore the potential of the large number of palm-clad islands which, in recent years, had been claimed by the French and which would in later years become known as the 'Lesser Dependencies'. He cast around for men who would be willing to exploit these islands with a view to exporting coconuts to Mauritius. One man, a M. Normand came forward and expressed interest, and after some consideration, asked for and was granted a concession to harvest coconuts on Diego Gracia. At the same time a M. Dauguet was granted a fishing concession on the island.

One of the terms of M. Dauguet's concession was that he provide a refuge for a number of lepers. It was known that turtles were plentiful at the island, and at that time, turtle meat was considered beneficial to, and even as a possible cure for sufferers of leprosy.

Messrs. Normand and Dauguet duly dispatched their expeditions to the island, consisting of overseers, slaves and the group of lepers. The number

of slaves was small, for it was considered that there were sufficient settlers on the island already to provide any extra labor force that might be required. There were already a number of lepers on the island, and this leper colony had gained a further two members when, in 1792, two unfortunate Lascar seamen were abandoned by a British ship after they had been in close contact with the lepers.

There are no records concerning these expeditions and little evidence regarding any success they may have had. However, progress must have been fairly satisfactory, because the venture raised the interest of merchants in Port Louis, the capital of Mauritius. One of these, a M. Laportaire, owned an oil pressing factory in Port Louis, which imported coconuts in the shell from Diego Garcia, presumably from M. Normand. In 1793, M. Laportaire consulted Lieutenant-General Maures, Comte de Malaric, who was now the governor of Mauritius, and expressed the opinion that the most effective way of increasing the supply of coconut oil in Mauritius would be to establish a factory on Diego Garcia to prepare copra in the 'Indian' fashion and export the oil itself to Mauritius. The governor promised his support.

However, Laportaire didn't wait for government approval, but sent out two ships, each manned by twenty-five or thirty men and with a suitable complement of slaves. An establishment, the first of those which were to dominate the history of the island for the next 175 years, was quickly brought into being and proved highly successful. By 1794, Laportaire had made a considerable quantity of oil available to merchants in Port Louis, in addition to giving over 900 veltes (velts = 1 1/2 gallons) to the government.

The next fifteen years cover the period of Napoleon's rise to power. Britain and France once more found themselves at war, and Mauritius, together with the outer islands came increasingly under the influence of the British

blockades. Consequently, reports from Diego Garcia during this time are necessarily sketchy. Few facts about the island seem to have been recorded. It is, however, known that during this period, another merchant, M. Paul Cayeux, formed a small establishment on the island, initially supplying slaves to gather nuts for Laportaire. After a time, Cayeux and Dauguet, the man who had been given the fishing concession, had gone into partnership and built their own factory for extracting coconut oil. There was yet another complication. Two interlopers, Blevec, a former overseer of Laportaire's and Chepe, a former ships master, had set up two mills on the island, employing about twenty slaves, a number they shortly intended to double. They were extracting the coconut oil in a very wasteful way and were making a huge profit. With these facts in mind, Laportaire, in 1808, weighed the results of his fifteen years experience and decided that his best course was one of expansion. He submitted a plan to the government, summarizing his past successes in developing the oil trade. He proposed that the island be partitioned, the two arms to be given to himself and the smaller southern area to Cayeux. He considered that the coconut harvest on the island was big enough to support 2 factories, but no more. He protested that Blevec and Chepe were operating on the island without government approval. (He apparently didn't press the point that he was doing the same). Laportaire's final proposal to the government was that the manufacture of oil on the island be prohibited and whole coconuts only be exported, since "the English, who so often visit Diego Garcia, look down on copra, but would not fail to seize manufactured oil".

Cayeux agreed with Laportaire's ideas and together with his brother, addressed Captain-General Decaen, then the effective ruler of Mauritius, appealing for the proposals to be adopted. He stressed the wastage of coconuts resulting from the methods of the 'new factories'. Some of the Captain-General's advisors were in favor of the scheme, but DeCaen himself thought otherwise. In

April, 1809, he gave permission to Blevec and Chepe to continue on Diego Garcia. He assigned the eastern part of the island to them and authorized Laportaire and Cayeux to maintain their current establishments. The manufacture of coconut oil was to cease immediately, only the whole coconut to be exported in future. DeCaen also ordered the concessionaires to be responsible for any lepers whom he might send to the island. Apart from this final note, it would appear that Laportaire had achieved all that he had set out to do. Not only had he, in a roundabout way, finally gained official recognition for his own establishment, but he had also nipped in the bud a potentially dangerous source of competition, namely the factory of Blevec and Chepe. It is difficult to see how they could cause any great wastage when they were limited to one part of the island and could in any case only export whole nuts.

Throughout this period of the island's history, one name stands out above all others; that of Laportaire. He appears to have been a very keen and astute businessman. However profit-oriented his motives may have been, he was nevertheless also concerned with the effects of the economic recession among his people, a matter which he was at pains to help resolve. That he was a public figure in Port Louis there can be little doubt, for when he wanted something, he seemed to know the right people to help him. He also had a keen sense of diplomacy, which enabled him to put proposals in such a way that they sounded very reasonable to the listener. Although he lived in Port Louis and rarely, if ever went to Diego Garcia, he was responsible for the origins of the 'establishment' system on the island, which was eventually to spread throughout the Lesser Dependencies and form the basis of a unique society, ideally suited to the area in which it existed. This society was based initially on slave labor, it is true, but it proved virile enough to survive the emancipation of the 1830's

and develop into a society of free contracted laborers, each having choice of contract.

Throughout this period, the occasional traveller would visit the island and sometime between 1800 and 1809, one such visitor, an unknown Frenchman, wrote down his impressions of life on the island. To conclude this chapter, here is an extract from his diary.

"The black laborers are able to knock birds out of the trees with the aid of a long rod, and catch fish at night, which they attract with burning torches, and these together with coconuts and cereals make for an abundance of food, which in turn leads to a high standard of living. Their dwellings are all supplied by the proprietors.

Apart from the oil and fish, which are both in great abundance on Diego Garcia, large, black sea-slugs are exported to Batavia in Java, where the Chinese have a secret method of preparing them and they have become a major article of commerce.

Another source of food is the 'cipaye' crab, which is large and has very strong claws. Also 'soldier' crabs are eaten in large numbers. For a long time, these crustaceans were thought to be peculiar to Diego Garcia, but they have since been found on the other islands in the Archipelago".

Chapter Five BRITISH OCCUPATION AND THE EMANCIPATION OF SLAVES.

Early in the morning on 3 December 1810, Mauritius capitulated to the British. Two days later, Robert Farquher, an official of the East India Company, was appointed governor. His first decision while in office was, to avoid any hardships, the business system in Mauritius and the establishments in the Lesser Dependencies would continue to be run as always, the concessions on Diego Garcia and the other islands remaining in the same hands as before. This would have come as a relief to people such as Laportaire and Cayeux, who must have been apprehensive of British inventions.

The first instruction that Farquher received from the British parliament was putting into effect measures designed to stop the slave trade in Mauritius and its dependencies. This was to prove no easy task. For one thing, the economy of Mauritius was dependent on slave labor, and for another, the attitude of the people was against these measures because they believed that British rule would only be temporary, and that with the inevitable French return, slave trading would again go into full swing. The worst problem that Farquher had to face was that the British parliament had not decreed an end to slavery, only to slave trading.

The establishments at Diego Garcia continued to import slaves from Mauritius and were within the law, for the slaves were only being moved within the area under Mauritius government jurisdiction. However, there is evidence that the Deigo Garcia establishments, in addition to those in the other islands, were also continuing to import slaves from Madagascar and Africa, claiming that these slaves had been resident on the islands since before the British takeover.

As there was no register of slaves prior to the occupation, the truth was difficult to establish.

Farquher remained governor for thirteen years, and during this time, worked patiently to plug the loopholes in the anti-slavery laws. Aided by the Royal Navy, who patrolled the nearby seas intercepting slave ships, he had a certain amount of success. He was able to get a great deal of support from local businessmen, who realized that the tide of public opinion was turning against slavery and surprisingly, also from the establishment owners themselves, who were conscious of the difficulty of imposing stringent conditions on their slaves in such remote areas. In fact, it would appear that the slaves on Diego Garcia, in particular, lived in conditions equal to their Mauritian overseers, and seem to have been slaves in name only. By the time that Farquher's term of office ended in 1823, slave trading had decreased considerably.

The new governor of Mauritius, Lowry Cole, was still faced with a number of problems when he took office in 1823. One of these was the fact that it was very difficult to enforce the anti-slave trading laws in the Lesser Dependencies, due to their remoteness. Reports would filter through to him from time to time about trading being continued on the island, or about trouble between slaves and overseers and he was under even more pressure than he predecessor from the British parliament to crush the trade once and for all. In this, however, he was little more successful than Farquher.

One of his early moves as governor, in 1824, was to send a government agent to Diego Garcia. Cole had been given reports of disturbances on the island between slaves and lepers, and the proprietors seemed unable to handle the situation. Accordingly, he decided to take a hand in the administration of the island. He appointed M. Le Camus as agent, and charged him with certain duties.

First, he was to do everything in his power to restore peace between the lepers, slaves and owners. Second, he was to familiarize himself with the situation of the harbor and its entrance, and act as pilot for any vessel entering Diego Garcia, unless he was able to determine that it was carrying slaves, in which case it was to be denied access and a report sent to Mauritius. Third, he was to regulate the dumping of ballast in the lagoon and insure that it was kept well away from the main channels. Fourth, he was, with the aid of labor provided by the lepers, to build a hospital on East Island, for the use, not only of the lepers, but also for crewmen of any ships calling at the island who were suffering from contagious diseases. This, it was hoped, would once and for all put an end to the troubles between the lepers and slaves. Finally, he was to report to Mauritius any damage or breach of the law committed by any visiting ships' crews.

M. Le Camus departed for Diego Garcia in June, 1824, and appears to have b ccessful in most of his duties. The one exception being that the hospital was er completed, the lepers continuing to mix freely with the slaves on the main island. However, he appears to have brought an end to the disturbances between the two groups and was even able to persuade the overseers to employ the lepers in coconut-gathering duties on the estates, thus achieving the maximum usage of manpower on the island.

M. Le Camus remained on Diego Garcia for five years. On his return to Mauritius, he reported to the new governor, James Colville, about conditions on the island. He claimed that all the duties with which he had been charged had been carried out, with the exception of the lazarette project, which, because of the end of the troubles on the island, was now unnecessary. He complained about the great distances he had been forced to travel on the island, often on foot

and in difficult conditions. He furthermore claimes that all the duties had been carried out at his own expense and that he had received no renumeration for them. The govenor apparently expressed surprise that Le Camus should be thinking in terms of payment for his duties, but nevertheless, promised to put the matter forward to his advisors for consideration. Two years later, when Laportaire died, and because of his concession was non-hereditory, the latter's establishment on Diego Garcia was given to Le Camus by way of reward.

In 1824, a survey was carried out on the island by Colonel E. A. Draper. This survey was of Laportaire's concession only and was probably at the instigation of Laporataire, who was ever concerned with greater yield from his conconut trees. A few months later, two brothers, W. and C. T. Hoart, carried out a survey of the whole island for the Mauritius Government. They produced the first completely accurate map of Diego Garcia. They were accompanied by a Mr. D. Werner, who wrote a report on the island. The report gave a considerable amount of information for the benefit of navigators of ships entering the harbor. He also reported that, at this time, the island was divided into four estates; those of Laportaire, Cayeux, Cayeux's bother and Blevec and Patee, Laportaire's being larger than the other three combined, having an area of 2,390 acres. He further mentions that topsoil had been brought from Mauritius and a few crops were being grown. Werner went on to say that the produce of the island was "coconuts and honey of a delicious quality", which suggests that bees had been introduced by that time to Diego Garcia. He pointed out that the island was of no further use for lepers, because, "at one time great quantities of turtle were taken, but latterly they have become extremely scarce".

The next few years saw a gradual improvement in the status of the slaves on Diego Garcia. Many establishment owners were already giving privilages that

slaves had never before experienced. They were allowed for the first time to have personal possession and to choose their own wives. Usually, their rations were far in excess of those laid down by law, and they were allowed to supplement these by rearing pigs and chickens. So when, in 1835, the Mauritius government followed the example of the British parliament and ordered the immediate emancipation of all slaves, very little in fact changed. The government decided that, in order to insure a smooth transition, all slaves would become "praedial apprentices", for a period of four years, bound to their former masters by compulsory contracts, into which were written the rates of pay and basic freedoms that each apprentice would be permitted, in addition to the alloted daily task that would be expected of him. This encouraged the apprentices to finish their daily tasks quickly in order to get more free time.

There are indications that this transition period was not without its problems. Both owners and slaves tried various means to extract more benefit to themselves from the new conditions, and quarrels were commonplace. On Diego Garcia, both the slaves and lepers were treated in the same manner and soon became indistinguishable. However, despite these problems, development towards individual freedom did proceed, albeit slowly. A certain amount of agricultural production had begun, notably with maize, tobacco and cotton, but this appeared to be an initiative of the apprentices rather that the management, and generally, the development of the island was desperately slow during this period.

In 1838, a Special Justice, Mr. Charles Anderson, was sent to Diego Garcia by the Mauritius Government to proclaim the act of emancipation to the slaves. As it turned out, they were already aware of it, having been for some time classed as 'praedial apprentices'. Anderson reported that at this time, there were three establishments on the island, namely those of Messrs. Majestre at

Minni Minni, Messrs. Marcy and Enouf at East Point and M. Paul Cayeux at Pointe Marianne, with a total output of 36,000 veltes of oil per year, oil production having by this time recommenced on the island. He also reported that "Diego Garcia has plenty of water and firewood, as well as pigs and poultry and it is much resorted to by whalers and vessels bound from England to India for supplies of that description".

Anderson then launched into a scathing attack on what he called the 'appalling' conditions existing in the establishments, and heavily criticized the owners for allowing such conditions to exist. "The state and condition of the apprentices on all these establishments are decidedly inferior to those of the laborers on the others islands which I have visited. The majority of the apprentices is composed of old, infirm and diseased people. Among the latter there are several deplorable cases of leprosy on each of the establishments. The greater part of the negroes have been brought at different times from Mauritius, from whence it has been the custom in many instances to remove them to Diego Garcia as a punishment. The evil effects of this system are manifested by the indolent and idle habits of the apprentices on this island, who never occupy themselves in any useful manner during their own time . . . . . Much discontent has been created among the apprentices by an imposed daily task which I considered too severe, and directed to be immediately abolished or diminished according to a scale which I fixed".

Anderson went on to say that he considered the comparatively low crime rate on the island was due to the "lack of spirituous liquors".

He continued: "There is a deplorable lack of hospital accomodation and the usual entire want of medical aid. In fact the comfort of the apprentices is in no way considered and proprietors are highly blameable for having witheld the

proper supplies of rice and clothing. I took great pains to point out the extreme impropriety of such a system, and to explain to the apprentices the nature and extent of their rights, from which I think a beneficial effect may result".

Whether conditions were really as bad as Mr. Anderson suggested is open to conjecture, but his report does confirm the fact that emancipation had caused very few changes in the system. The Mauritius Government obviously didn't see anything unusual in the administration of the estates, for when M. Paul Cayeux died later that same year, they were quite content to pass on the concession to his sons, who had in fact been effectively running the business for some time.

The transition from slavery to apprenticeship was also responsible for a technological improvement on Diego Garcia. It had been the custom before 1835 to use teams of slaves to turn the heavy apparatus which crushed the copra to produce oil. One of the clauses of the emancipation bill, however, stated that it was unlawful to use apprentices for work better suited to beasts of burden. Therefore the proprietors decided to import a number of donkeys to carry out this task. This change had a number of advantages. First, it made available more apprentices to gather, dehusk and break the coconuts, thereby producing more raw material to feed the increased output of the mill. Second, the spare donkeys could be utilized as a means of transport, cutting down the amount of time used in travelling to outlying areas. Last, the donkeys formed a useful emergency food supply, should ships be unable to get through to the island, and records show that this was a fairly common occurence.

Another visitor to the island in 1838 was Captain Robert Moresby, of the Royal Navy. He carried out a full hydrographic survey of the lagoon and

ocean coast of Diego Garcia. The soundings that he made still form the basis of the charts used to this day, although there have, of course, been further surveys to improve them. Moresby made a number of comments regarding the island and its produce. He recorded "Maize, tobacco, cabbage, greens, sweet potatoes, onions, carrots, turnips, leeks, garlic and all common vegetables cultivated in India. Also limes and citrons. Pompions and plantains grow wild and cotton is widespread". Moresby was responsible for introducing breadfruit to the island from Ceylon. It apparently thrived and formed a useful addition to the islanders' diet. He observed that the animal life included donkeys, rat, pigs, poultry and feral cats.

The system of 'praedial apprenticeship interposed between the abolition of slavery and the achievement of full human rights came to an end in Mauritius and its dependencies in 1839. From this time on, laborers on Diego Garcia were free to negotiate the terms of their contracts, or to apply immediately for repatriation to Mauritius. No contracts were to be valid for more than a year and were to be terminated at the end of this period without notice having to be given on either side. All contracts were to be witnessed by stipiendary magistrates. The system, however, must have seemed relatively fair to the laborers, because the population of Deigo Garcia, in particular, continued to rise, suggesting that many laborers preferred to stay on after their initial one year contract had expired.

Interference from Mauritius in the affairs of the Lesser Dependencies was kept to a minimum for a while after this, and as the middle years of the nineteenth century approached, the affairs of Diego Garcia and the other islands were firmly in the hands of the estate owners. Generally though, they appear to have kept to the letter of the law in their relations with the laborers,

relations which seem to have remained good. This state of affairs was to continue for a number of years, as the island plodded very, very slowly towards the beginnings of modernization and greater control from the central authorities in Mauritius.

Chapter Six

THE TRAVELLING MAGISTRATES

Diego Garcia had, since Le Camus' time been administered purely by the plantation owners, through their managers on the spot. There was very little interference by the Mauritius Government in affairs on any of the islands of the Lesser Dependencies. The laws which were applied on Diego Garcia were those laid down in the 1838 Order of Council on emancipation of slaves, and the authorities in Mauritius evidently saw no advantage in altering the system. They had been, however, under a certain amount of pressure from the British Parliament to bring the Lesser Dependencies further under the rule of law. They were able to resist this pressure for a number of years, but during the 1850's to take the first tentative steps towards closer government supervision of the islands. In 1859, the governor, Sir William Stevenson, sent two special commissioners, Lieutenant H. Berkley and Mr. J. Caldwell, to visit the islands of the Chagos Archipelago to report on conditions in the plantations there. They were charged with general inspectorial duties, and ordered to pursue two particular lines of enquiry. The most important of these was to investigate complaints of laborers having been brought to the islands against their will, or having been unlawfully detained on the islands after the expiration date of their contracts. Second, they were to determine whether any of the laborers wished to complain about any form of ill-treatment by either the plantation owners or the managers.

The report which the commissioners issued dealt with Diego Garcia in detail and was very favorable as regards the treatment of the laborers. It appeared that the laws laid down in the 1838 Order of Council were being used

as the framework of society on all the estates. There were no serious complaints either by the managers or laborers towards each other or about conditions, and everything appeared to be running very smoothly. Lt. Berkley and Mr. Caldwell reported a population of 338, broken down into 258 men, 39 women and 41 children. Production of oil was up to 51,000 veltes per year. In addition to coconuts, the commissioners noted tamarind, bitter oranges, lemons, sugar cane and vanilla growing in the gardens at East Point. There were said to be nearly 350 donkeys on the island. The report concluded by saying that the island was "healthy" and abounded in "all the necessities of life, and the inhabitants have nothing to desire". The commissioners suggested that more regular visits to the island by government agents should be made, in order to ensure that the status quo was maintained, and recommended that the ratio of male to female laborers be adjusted to give a more balanced population.

The Mauritius Government apparently took little action over this report for a number of years. True, they dispatched Commander Hardinge, in HMS Persian to report, in 1860, on the islands which were missed out the previous year, but no further visits to the Chagos Archipelago were envisaged in the immediate future. It was not until 1864 that any further Government action was forthcoming. In that year, a District Magistrate was appointed for the Lesser Dependencies. He was to have the same powers as a magistrate in Mauritius, involving himself in both civil and criminal matter, and was to be responsible for supervising the signing of all contracts between employer and employee. In November, 1864, this first magistrate, Charles Farquharson, visited Diego Garcia, on board the 'Rapid'. He found the Minni Minni and Point Marianne estates to be in good order. The laborers were apparently well treated and they had no complaints

concerning the management. The story at East Point, however, was not so good. Mr. Farquharson reports; "Shortly after my arrival, the whole of the laborers came in a body, and in a clamorous and disorderly manner, asked to be taken aboard the 'Rapid' stating that the manager used them very badly, overworked them and did not feed them". Farquharson discovered that the reason for this unruly mob was that the estate had recently had a new manager who was merely trying to bring the estate back into line with the other two, his predecessor apparently allowed discipline to deteriorate badly. The magistrate continued; "On investigation into the treatment of the laborers and in regard to food, lodgings and wages, I found that this estate was in no way behind the two others." Farquharson reported the population of the island was 267 men, 45 women, and 46 children. The managers and their families accounted for a further 20, making 378 in all.

In 1865, the Mauritius Government took a further step toward centralized control of the islands. The plantation owners, who at this time, still held title through the concession arrangement, were given the opportunity of changing the legal status of their occupancy. They were offered perpetual grants of their holding in exchange for a cash payment of two shillings for each velte of coconut oil produced, based on the previous years' production figures. In the case of Diego Garcia, this amounted to 66,000 veltes, split between the three estates. There were, however, certain conditions to the offer. The government retained the right to take possession at any time of up to two acres of land on each estate, if the land should be required for public purpose, such as for a school or hospital. Queen Victoria was to have sole right to any mines, precious stones or metals found on any property. The right of the ownership was to be immediately revoked by the government, should any attempt be made to transfer

land to a person other that a British subject. The terms must have seemed reasonable, because the proprietors of the estates on Diego Garcia all elected to change their rights of tenure.

In 1872, the Mauritius Government took a further step towards bringing the Lesser Dependencies more closely under Mauritius law. They appointed the junior magistrate of Port Louis as the District Magistrate for the islands. This meant that the islands would be considered in law as though they were part of the district of Port Louis and the magistrate was to have the same powers, authority and jurisdiction on the islands as he had in Mauritius.

Two years later, before any of these magistrates had, in fact, visited the Islands, the government took the further step of appointing the Stipendiary Magistrate of Port Louis as the Stipiendary Magistrate for the Lesser Dependencies, who would also assume the duties of the District Magistrate. He would be able to try to send the accused back to Mauritius for trial by higher court. The stipendiary magistrates were to become virtually the chief administrators of the Lesser Dependencies, being responsible to the governor of Mauritius for most facets of island life, and were, in effect, to act as government advisors to the managers on the spot. The government also enpowered the magistrates to appoint Civil Status Officers on the islands, usually to be the senior manager on an island with more than one estate. The job of the Civil Status Officer was more or less the same as that of a registrar in modern Britain, to record births, marriages and deaths and issue certificates accordingly. They were also to insure that the books of each estate were kept in good order, so that they might be inspected by the magistrate on his next regular visit.

In 1875, the first visiting Stipendiary and District Magistrate for the

Lesser Dependencies, Mr. E. Pakenham Brooks, toured the islands. It was eleven years since the last magisterial visit. He reported the population of Diego Garcia as 300, being 176 men, 57 women and 68 children, a slight drop over previous years. Minni Minni and Pointe Marianne estates he found to be in good order, but there was a different story at East Point. There, he found that the manager, Mr. James Spurs, had resorted to imprisioning his laborers for long periods, often unfairly, and the laborers complained generally about his treatment of them. The magistrate fined Mr. Spurs on three counts for inhumane behavior, but however, pointed out by way of mitigation that several laborers had been resident on the estate for between ten and twenty years and wished to stay indefinitely, thus inferring that Mr. Spurs' treatment was perhaps no worse than the norm.

Regular inspections of the Lesser Dependencies by magistrates continued through the 1870's and 1880's. The pioneers, E. Pakenham Brooks, J. H. Ackroyd, Ivanoff Dupont and A. Boucherat, travelled extensively through the islands during this period, often in conditions of great discomfort. Ackroyd, in particular, seems to have been extremely unlucky voyager. In 1876, he took nineteen days to cover the 1,200 miles from Port Louis to Diego Garcia, and a further eleven days in mountainous seas to reach Egmont Island, a distance of seventy miles. In the following year, Ackroyd took 28 days to travel from Diego Garcia to Mauritius, and few months later, this time because of light winds, 47 days from Mauritius to Eagle Island. On that tour, Ackroyd was away from Mauritius for three months, spending less than two weeks on land. All the magistrates had strong words to say on the subjects of cramped and stuffy quarters, bad food, nauseating smells, erratic masters and voyages of unpredictable length. There were even worse hazards. Dupont was shipwrecked

on Agalega Island in 1879, and three months were to pass before a vessel called to take him home.

The magistrates invariably made lengthy reports about conditions in the islands and during the next twenty years, these careful reports provide a comprehensive picture of the Lesser Dependencies and a medium through which the qualities of administration in the islands could be assessed. Ackroyd, in particular, was very outspoken about conditions on the islands, often being bluntly critical of the local administrators, but just as often coming down on the side of the managers when following up laborer's complaints. He was very strict in laying down official standards for the dimensions of homes and hospitals and seemed to be adept at persuading the managers to improve these buildings.

In his report of 1880, Ackroyd gave the following account of life on Diego

"he island, aquatic birds are numerous and the edible and hawksbill turtle ..., but are scarce. Horned cattle do not thrive, but there are some goats and they do well. Except for the managers, sub-managers and their families who are Europeans, the population consists of Africans, Creoles and Malagashes. The work is generally carried out by task. 500 or 600 coconuts have to be picked up per day and husked, a task which is easily accomplished. The breaking and shelling are afterwards done by women, who have to do 1,500 per day. The coconut, after having been picked up and broken, is dried in the sun and crushed in a mill of primitive construction, consisting of a heavy wooden roller working in a hollow block of wood, the rollers being turned by donkeys. Generally, the men are in good health and frequently save from one quarter to one half of their wages. They live in good huts, made of coconut

leaves and having a wooden framework. Most of them grow pumpkins, bananas and a fruit called the papaye (paw-paw). There is, however, no provision made for the education or religious instruction of the laborers or their children; and a great disproportion of women to men exists. This evil has existed from the time of slavery. The population at present is 227 men, 86 women and 87 children, a total of 400".

Ackroyd went on to criticise the lack of communication between the various islands, a fact which he was at pains to point out, made his job that much more difficult, greatly cutting down the time that he was able to spend on each island.

All the magistrates reported 'disrespect' for the institution of marriage among the islanders and a large number of the cases they dealt with arose out of quarrels over women. There was, however, little major crime, most of the charges dealt with, concerning petty theft or insubordination.

Hospitals were provided on each estate, which were generally up to the standards prescribed by the Mauritius Government, and the island was generally healthy. The common complaints of the time are demonstrated by the large quantities of laxatives and antiseptics used. Ackroyd found a shortage of castor oil at Pointe Marianne, and upon questioning the manager, was informed that consumption had exceeded supply, "the men being rather partial to it". The only black patch in the otherwise good health record of Diego Garcia was the appallingly high rate of infant mortality. James Spurs had a comment to make about this to Ackroyd. He claimed that the high number of deaths amongst babies was due to the ill-treatment of pregnant women by their men and the gross carelessness of the women themselves.

Spurs himself has been described as a 'despotic but benevolent man'.

He was manager at East Point from 1866, until he joined the Orient Steam Navigation Company in 1883. He had very personal views of right and wrong and thoroughly applied these standards throughout. He introduced the system of allowing the laborers to build their own houses and gave much more than the legal amount of clothing and rations. He came down heavily against drunkenness, and forbade the killing of sea-birds and 'cipaye' crabs, in order that their numbers might build up again. The visiting magistrates came to regard him with increasing confidence and respect, as an efficient and upright man, and in 1883, Ivanoff Dupont paid official tribute to his "outstanding administrative ability".

These early travelling magistrates set a pattern that was to last for nearly a hundred years. Except for war time and a few rare occasions, a magistrate visited Diego Garcia every year until the mid-1960s. Pakenham Brooks, Ackroyd, Dupont and Boucherat wrote an immense amount about conditions and points of interest in the islands, and it is due to these men that we know so much about this stage in the development of the Lesser Dependencies. Their matter-of-fact reports appear at first glance to be very dry, but as one reads further into them, a clear picture of the islands and the people who populated them emerges, as do the personalities of the men who wrote them. They appear to have been a very prim and proper band, with a righteous sense of duty and mission, but it was evidently this which enabled them to endure the appalling conditions of travel to bring justice and government control to one of the most remote areas of the world. Future generations on the islands would owe much to the efforts of these men to achieve for them a decent standard of life and a reasonable basis of law under which to live.

Chapter Seven THE COALING STATIONS

In the 1880's, Diego Garcia, alone among the Lesser Dependencies was subjected to one of the effects of the European Industrial Revolution. By this time, sailing ships had largely given way to steam, particularly for long-distance travel and many shipping companies were searching for coaling stations, where they could maintain large stocks of coal to refuel their ships on trans-oceanic voyages. In 1881, the Orient Steam Navigation Company wanted to run a direct steam-ship service to Australia, via the Suez Canal, the problem being that it was necessary to re-fuel somewhere well to the east of the Red Sea. Accordingly, they decided to give up their coaling station in Aden and cast around for a more suitable alternative. As Diego Garcia was on the direct route from the Red Sea to Australia, the company sent an inspector to the island. His report was highly favorable, and so the Company established themselves on the island in 1882. Almost simultaneously, a London firm of coal merchants, Lund and Company, also installed a depot on the island. Whereas the Orient Company intended to supply only their own ships, Messrs. Lund were open to contract and were prepared to supply all comers.

The Governor of Mauritius was concerned about the possible impact of these enterprises on the life of the island, and in early 1883, sent Ivanoff Dupont to make enquiries. Dupont arrived to find James Spurs had been appointed as the local agent for the Orient Company, in addition to his other job as manager of East Point Estate. The company had also imported forty Somali laborers and seventeen Europeans and were constructing steel lighters at East Point. Spurs was negotiating with the company to replace the Somalis with Mauritians, as he was unhappy with the amount of work achieved with the former. Messrs. Lund

had imported no staff, but had agreed with the proprietors of the estates to hire their laborers when required. They had appointed G. Worsell as their agent at East Point. Both companies were storing their stocks of coal in hulks anchored at Minni Minni and East Point, and Orient also had a yard ashore in the latter village. The companies jointly expected to import 50,000 tons of coal yearly, although at the time of Dupont's visit, only 15,000 tons were on the island.

By the time of Dupont's arrival, several ships had already visited the coaling stations. Each coaling operation had taken between twenty-four and sixty-eight hours and during this time, passengers were normally forbidden to land, unless they had the express permission of the Civil Status Officer (the senior estate manager). There was a strict quarantine which had prevented the introduction of disease to Diego Garcia and there had been no trouble involving passengers or crews on the island. Dupont was impressed and made a report to effect. Unfortunately, it turned out to be premature.

The Governor of Mauritius was not completely satisfied with the report on the coaling stations and sent Dupont back the following year. Things had changed somewhat on the island and were not now going so smoothly. Spurs was now employed full-time by the Orient Company, which had leased Middle and East Islands from the Mauritius Government and moved their hulks to Baryton Point. Middle Island was to be the home of Spurs and the laborers' camp was to be on East Island. Most of the laborers were at this time living under canvas. The water on East Island was very brackish and drinking water had to be ferried from the main island. Spurs had a distillation plant, but apparently, nobody knew how to assemble it. It had become easy for the islanders to obtain drink from passing ships and there was one report of a laborer dying from alcoholic

poisoning. Passengers and crews had been going ashore in increasing numbers and plundering the plantations. With all this in mind, Dupont recommended that a government official be stationed permanently on the island.

In February, 1884, Messrs. Lund proposed the inauguration of a mail service from Mauritius to Columbo, which would link up at Diego Garcia with the Cape of Good Hope to Australia services, thus considerably improving the mail service to Mauritius itself. The company's proposal was turned down, however, because the building of necessary passenger accomodation ashore at Diego Garcia would have made the quarantine difficult to enforce.

The Mauritius Government, acting upon Dupont's recommendation, passed an ordinance enabling it to post a police officer to the island, but by the time of Dupont's next visit, in October, 1884, no police post had in fact been established. On this visit, Dupont found that Messrs. Lund had appointed a new agent, J. N. Beaver, and now had an independent labor force of forty-five Mauritians. They appeared to be well paid and were housed in excellent huts. The Company had buoyed all the reefs from the entrance of the lagoon to East Point. James Spurs, on the other hand, was still having problems. He had completed his laborer's camp, but due to various complications, many of his laborers were having to share his accomodation on Middle Island. The distillation plant was still in pieces. The Orient Company had tried to ease the lot of their employees by offering free passages to Diego Garcia for their wives, but most of the men declined to take up this offer. Dupont found them to be a surly and undisciplined lot. Spurs complained that the men had proved to be poor workers and said he was contemplating importing Chinese labor. Dupont was more than ever persuaded that a police post was urgently needed on Diego Garcia.

Dupont records one particularly nasty, but somewhat comic incident which had occured a few months previously. In January, 1884, the sailing ship 'Windsor Castle', with Captain Raymond as master, had arrived with several hundred tons of coal for Messrs. Lund. The ship anchored at East Point. On February 24, "while in a drunken fit, Captain Raymond landed at East Point with sixteen men, armed with loaded guns; had the Union Jack hoisted at the top of a tree in front of the Manager's house paraded his men; had a volley fired at the house (then unoccupied); patrolled about; informed the manager that he had taken possession of the island in the name of the British Government, and appointed Mr. LeConte, the head manager, in writing Lieutenant-Governor". Fortunately, Captain Raymond then came to his senses and went back to his s , which sailed the next day.

nt also comments on the quarantine regulations enforced on the island. O ary 14, the steamer 'Natal' belonging to Messrs. Lund arrived at Eas it with ninety passengers on board, eight of whom were suffering from measles. "A child died the next day from that disease and it was attempted to take the body to East Point to be buried, but on refusal of Mr. LeConte to allow it, for fear that the disease might spread out on the island, the steamer left the next day with the body, which was to be thrown overboard outside the bay". On a disease free island, an outbreak of measles might have decimated the population.

A police post was finally established at Minni Minni in November, 1885, with a complement of one inspector, one non-commissioned officer and six men. The police officer was given certain magisterial powers, which had previously been conferred on the plantation managers. However, the jurisdiction of the police inspector was to be suspended whenever the travelling magistrate was

on Diego Garcia. The police officer was also required to levy a due of six cents per registered ton on every ship arriving at the island, with the exception of warships. This money was intended to pay the costs of the police post, but in fact was never used for this purpose. An argument started between the British and Mauritius Governments about responsibility of financing the police post and, with this question remaining unresolved, the Mauritius authorities eventually withdrew the men.

A change in the ownership of the plantations had occurred in 1883. In order to standardize the production methods, the various estates of the Chagos Archipelago had combined into one large company, the 'Societe Huiliere de Diego et Peros'. The only immediate effect of this amalgamation on Diego Garcia was the decision to close down the estate headquarters at Minni Minni and combine that estate with the one at East Point. Point Marianne virtually remained as a separate estate.

When Mr. Magistrate Boucherat visited the island in 1888, there was still a police officer resident, but he didn't remain there much longer. The Mauritius Government had forecast that the coaling stations would close down and they were proved right, for the Orient Company had discontinued their operations on Diego Garcia. Spurs had left for Columbo, having sold the Company's vessels and plants to Messrs. Lund. The Orient Company had invested over $33,000 in the vessels alone and had found the island an unprofitable port of call. Boucherat guessed that Messrs. Lund would also give up their interests on Diego Garcia, and this they did a few months later. Apart from their agent, they now had only one permanent employee on the island, although the agent was still able to enlist temporary

labourers when required. Diego Garcia was on the point of reverting to its staple industry, the production of coconut oil.

Chapter Eight THE FIRST HALF OF THE TWENTIETH CENTURY

From 1888 onwards, conditions on Diego Garcia were very much as they had been in the days before the coaling stations, and coconuts became, once more, the basis of the island's economy. By the early 1890s, the island society had reverted to a condition of stability, and this state was to last until well into the twentieth century. The travelling magistrates continued to visit the island at least annually, and still prepared their voluminous reports on life and conditions there. These reports had their value, however, for they enabled the Mauritius Government to continually up-date the laws governing relations between employer and employee and to monitor the well-being of the native workers.

During the early years of the twentieth century, the Mauritius Government passed certain ordinances, allowing the appointment of various specialists to tour the Lesser Dependencies, to contribute their know-how and generally advise the local populations in their various fields. It was hoped that this move would create an influx of new ideas and help to prevent any stagnation in the unique societies existing on the islands.

One of the first of these specialists to visit Diego Garcia was a Doctor Powell, who went as the Head of a medical mission in 1908. He found health conditions to be very satisfactory and the death rate still low, despite the fact that apparentlys, even the most elementary sanitation conditions, with regard to latrines and water supply, were ignored by both the labor, and the management. Dr. Powell was, it seems, strongly in favor of the islanders being forbidded to take wine away from the village shop, preferring them to drink it at the counter, as he thought this would

help to avoid the common troubles and fights. He blamed much of the island's crimes and disease on the quality of the wine. "Only coarse wine is given, and then comes the rub, a fight and the knife".

In the 1890s, the main buildings at East Point were renovated and in 1895, the church was built. Shortly after this, the jetty was constructed, together with a light railway running along it from the copra mill, motive power being provided by donkeys. Thus, East Point gradually became the main commercial center of the island. The buildings at Minni Minni and on East and Middle Islands were abandoned, as were a number of buildings at Point Marianne. By 1910, all copra processing was being carried out at East Point.

Despite the apparent stability, technological change came to Diego Garcia during the 1900s, when copra platforms were introduced from the Seychelles. These platforms dried copra by a combination of sun and artificial heat and greatly increased the production of the plantations. By 1910, copra had replaced coconut oil as Diego Garcia's main export. For over a hundred years, the Chagos Archipelago had been known as the 'Oil Islands', but this name had now become redundant. The annual yield from Diego Garcia in the early years of this century was around five million nuts, half the total yield of the entire Chagos group.

Hints of the possible use of Diego Garcia as a strategic base became apparent again at the turn of the century. In 1899, two German warships, the 'Bismarck' and the 'Marie' anchored in the lagoon for a while, and shortly afterwards, the Bristish warships 'Hampshire' and Empress of Russia' paid a visit. It seemed that the great powers were keen to check the potential of the harbor a possible haven in event of future conflict.

Several scientific surveys took place on Diego Garcia during this period. G. C. Bourne spent four months in 1886, studying the geology and the bird and plant life of the island. Then, in 1899, the Deutsche Tiefsee-Expedition, aboard the 'Valdivia' carried out a survey of the marine fauna. They were followed six years later by the Percy Sladen Trust Expedition, led by J. Stanley Gardiner, which studied the island's geomorphology, together with marine and land plants and animals. It was only after the reports issued by these expeditions had been thoroughly studied that scientists really became aware of the unique construction of atoll formations and the myriads of life forms associated with them, both in and out of the water.

This scientific study of Diego Garcia was to be continued in later years, but before that time, more momentous events were to disturb the life of the island, events which were to radically change the world order and, in time, lead to the end of the colonial system, under which the island had comfortably nestled for so many years. The affairs of the atoll were to be greatly altered, not by events close to it, but by happenings many thousands of miles away, in places that the islanders had in all probability, never heard of.

In August 1914, the First World War broke out. Apart from one isolated incident, life carried on pretty well as normal on Diego Garcia. Full copra production was maintained and there was little or no interference with ships carrying the copra to Mauritius. The population were not called upon in any way to help the war effort, so no disruption of island life occurred.

The one incident which did take place has itself been the subject of numerous books. Barely a month after the war had started, a fact of which

the islanders were not yet aware, the German cruiser 'Emden' called at Diego Garcia. The 'Emden' had carried out a number of successful raids against British property in the Indian Ocean area, but was now being hotly pursued by a British squadron. For this reason, the Captain of the 'Emden' urgently needed a safe anchorage to carry out repairs, take on supplies and move coal. Diego Garcia was the nearest harbor of any consequence, so he decided to enter, reasoning that any hostile natives would be quickly subdued when faced with the 'Emden's' fire-power. However, immediately upon anchoring, the Assistant Manager of the plantation came aboard, "Came into the wardroom and made very good practice with the iced whisky and soda". This surprised the Captain until, "the conversation became interesting from the moment that we recognized that this manager a[illegible] the [illegible]habitants had no idea that there was a war on in the world".

[illegible]ta[illegible]n explained the battle damage to the ship as having been caused by [illegible]. The islanders gave the ship a live pig, fish and fruit, and recei[illegible]ne and whisky in return. With much cheering from the population, the ship then proceeded to sea. Shortly afterwards, the group of British warships arrived and the islanders discovered their mistake. The British ships took off in pursuit, and the 'Emden' was hounded for some weeks until, on 9 November 1914, she was destroyed at Cocos-Keeling by a naval force led by HMAS Sydney.

This incident effectively ended Diego Garcia's involvement in the First World War, and the island settled back to continue its quiet existence through the 1920s and 1930s. The middle years of the 1930s saw coconut production at its highest in the island's history. The export of 'cocos arbes', the coconut of the greengrocers shop was greatly stepped up during this period, at one stage running in excess of 100,000 nuts per year.

The relative calm of this period ended abruptly in the early 1940s. Britain was once more at war with Germany. Initially, this was to affect the island little, but when in late 1941, the Japanese entered the war and commenced their conquest of South-East Asia and the Pacific Islands, events were brought closer to the island than they had been at any time since the Napoleonic wars. The Japanese attacked Columbo in 1942, and this, together with the weakened state of the Royal Navy in the area, made the Allies aware that the Indian Ocean would be open for Japanese 'island-hopping', just as the Pacific had been. Accordingly, several islands were selected to be used as small military bases, to help keep an eye on the situation in the region. One of these islands was Diego Garcia. Six-inch guns were installed at Eclipse Point to guard the entrace to the lagoon and an R.A.F. squadron of Catalina flying boats was sent to East Point. In addition, an observation post was set up near Barton Point, connected to East Point by a submarine cable. Surveys of the facilities on the island were made by all three services, in case it was decided to expand the base, but in the event, this did not prove to be necessary. The regular wartime complement of the atoll turned out to be no more than the flying boat squadron, a small Royal Naval party, to operate small craft, and a detachment of Indian troops to man the six-inch guns.

Life must have seemed idyllic to these men, stationed on a lonely atoll, so far from the main theatres of war, and one can only surmise the thoughts of the native population on seeing all this, to them, frenzied activity going on around their island. Many of them would have been seeing aircraft for the first time in their lives, for Diego Garcia is far from

the usual air-routes, and to have seventy-five airmen suddenly billeted amongst them must have been an unnerving experience to say the least.

Nevertheless, the life among the plantations carried on much as it always had. There was a slight drop in production during the war years, but this is probably explained by a certain percentage of the islanders being employed by supply produce to the servicemen or to act as domestic servants. There is certainly no evidence to suggest that the wartime activity drastically affected the island society, more likely, it was infused with new ideas, making it all the more virile. Islander and serviceman probably co-existed amicably, each benefiting from the others' experiences.

In September, 1944, Diego Garcia took a heavy battering, not from enemy action but from natural causes. A violent cyclone, mercifully rare in this [illegible] ripped across the southern half of the atoll. The plantation, together with R.A.F. installations suffered severe damage. The moored Catalinas were swept [illegible] the beach - one remains there to this day - and hundreds of coconut palms were blown down or stripped bare, but damage to buildings was luckily slight. Worse, however, was to come. Within a few days, a large part of the population, including most of the airmen, had succumbed to dengue, or trench fever. Some of the islanders died from the disease, which is not normally fatal, but all the servicemen recovered. The remainder of 1944 was spent repairing the storm damage, islanders and servicemen assisting each other, and gradually the island returned to normal. In more than thirty years which have passed since that time, no cyclone has passed close enough to Diego Garcia to make its presence felt.

In late 1945, the Japanese were finally beaten. The expected attacks on the Indian Ocean islands had never materialized. The small base on Diego Garcia

had played its part in insuring the security of the area, but had now become redundant. The R.A.F. squadron was withdrawn before the end of the year, as was the Royal Naval party. A small salvage team stayed on for a few weeks, but by mid-1946, the natives had the island to themselves once more. Following a visit to the island in 1948, it was found that service installations had all fallen into decay, the islanders having commandeered anything worthwhile for their own use. Diego Garcia, within a few short months had reverted once more to its normal state of stability.

Chapter Nine

THE POST WAR YEARS

A further ordinance was passed by the Mauritius Government in 1945, enpowering the Governor to appoint all the magistrates for Mauritius and the dependencies, and to assign any one of these magistrates as the travelling magistrate for the Lesser Dependencies. This magistrate was to have the same powers as his predecessors, but the main practical effect of the new ordirance was to make available particular talents and experience which may not have been possessed by any one magistrate. During the late 1940s and 1950s, these magistrates continued to visit Diego Garcia on a regular basis just as the first ones had done in the nineteenth century, dealing as they did in relatively uncomplicated cases, and inspecting water supplies and general methods. In addition, in the 1950s, technical officers were posted to the island, and schoolteachers and midwives paid regular visits to teach some of their skills to the local people. Other frequent visitors included doctors, sanitary inspectors, agricultural experts, police officers and labor officials. All these added their quota to the advancement of the islanders.

In 1957, the traveller, Robert Scott, visited Diego Garcia, aboard HMS Loch Killisport. He wrote at length on his impressions of the island. He described East Point village as looking like "a French coastal village, miraculously transferred whole to this shore,....the architecture, the touches of old fashioned ostentation in the 'chateau' and its relation to the church; the disposition of trees and flowering shrubs across the ample green....all contribute towards giving the village this quality". Scott was equally enthusiastic about the welcome he received from the villagers, commenting particularly

on the small Union Jacks being waved by each child. He saw the village itself as an attractive oasis, almost overwhelmed by the dark green gloom of the surrounding jungle, but this impression turned out to be only surface deep. At a closer look, the village appeared to be inundated with chickens and infested with flies, nuisances which were largely ignored by the natives. The chickens were so numerous that a party of ratings from the 'Loch Killisport' found the asking price for stewing fowls to be three English cigarettes each. Outside the village, other introduced animal life made its presence felt. Rats were everywhere, appearing particularly acrobatic as they jumped through the trees like squirrels, and bands of wild donkeys fed on just about everything in sight, including after dark, the vegetables and flowers of the village gardens. Donkeys were still used for turning the mill - a limited amount of oil being produced for local use - but transport throughout the island had now become mechanized. Tractors were used extensively for clearance work in the plantations and for hauling carts full of coconuts back to the drying sheds.

One small change had occurred in the island's economy during the 1950s. With fertilizers fetching a high price throughout the world, it had become an economical proposition to exploit some guano deposits in the Northwestern part of the island. By 1957, one-third of the total value of exports from Diego Garcia were in the form of guano shipments.

Another small source of income for the islanders during this period was the manufacture of brooms and brushes for export to Mauritius. There was no shortage of raw materials and many housewives earned a useful extra income this way. Also any grain, usually maize, grown by the islanders, which was surplus to their own requirements would be purchased by the company. The

dried fish industry underwent a revival on Diego Garcia, although Mauritians were very wary of any fish caught at the island, regarding many species as poisonous.

The islanders claimed, with some justification, that in this post-war period, their shop at East Point had become the best in the Lesser Dependencies. Certainly it appeared to carry an amazing stock, covering all possibilities from births to deaths. There were cradles for infants, trousseaux for brides and headstones for corpses. All the basic necessities for life were stocked and Scott records that it was almost impossible to move within the confines of the building.

The impression given by Scott is of a virile community, contentedly proceeding along a course set so many years before. The islanders wanted for little, basic needs being supplied by the company and the little extras being available at the store or in the gardens and jungle. The laborers were able to save between a quarter and a half of their pay. The island was extremely healthy, old age being the most common cause of death, and diseases were virtually non-existent. The people, although apparently set in their ways, were receptive to new ideas and trends, and were not averse to change, particularly if they thought anything good would come of it. The temporary laborers at this time were mainly from the Seychelles as opposed to Mauritius, so were already accustomed to small-island life, and they appeared to be able to fit into the community with very little effort. Many of them brought their families, with the intention of settling permanently on the island. The managers were still Mauritians, appointed by the company, but invariable, they were trained in administrative duties before being sent to the island, so were easily capable of dealing with the usual day-to-day affairs of the population.

Scott looked for possible effects on the character of the islanders by what he called "the dark green oppressiveness of their luxuriant surroundings", but was unable to detect any characteristics, apart from the dubious ones of dourness and hardheadedness, and it is doubtful whether the people were overly affected by the conditions, which were in any case not unique to Diego Garcia.

During the 1950s, the manager of the Diego Garcia plantation started running regular boat trips to Egmont Atoll, which had been uninhabited for some years, in order to gather that island's coconut crop. This contributed a fair percentage to the overall yield of the plantation for a while, but by 1960, these trips had ceased, probably because the poor anchorage and difficult terrain on Egmont made the enterprise risky and unprofitable.

Numerous scientific expeditions visited Diego Garcia during the 1950s and 1960s, collectively studying all aspects of the zoology, botany and geomorphology of the island. Because of its remoteness, the atoll was ideal for studying the migratory habits of sea birds and also certain land birds. In addition, the marine life found in the lagoon and surrounding seas is representative of the Indian Ocean in general, and so the island made an ideal base for scientific study. The islanders, as are all people who live close to nature, were keen observers of the life around them and were able to offer considerable aid to the various scientists who were trying to establish past and future trends as regards bird and other animal migration and populations.

Another branch of science represented on the island during the post-war period was meterology. A weather station was established near East Point in 1946 and worked in conjunction with stations on many of the other islands of the Lesser Dependencies. Their prime purpose was to examine conditions leading to cyclone formation and to plot the courses of the cyclones once they had formed.

Many of the Indian Ocean cyclones come into being in the vicinity of Diego Garcia, subsequently swinging south, then west, to threaten the Mauritius area. Every once in a while, as in 1944, a cyclone will double back along its track and pass over Diego Garcia, but as has already been mentioned, this is an extremely rare occurrance.

The island society which entered the 1960s was virtually indistinguishable from the one which existed at the turn of the century. There was, it is true, a tendency for the population to decrease. As with rural communities the world over, young people were being attracted by the bright lights of the cities and moving to more urban areas, the urban area in this case being Port L Whether this would have had any far-reaching effects on the island so is difficult to decide, for in many parts of the world, this trend has r rsed during the seventies. In the case of Diego Garcia, the discussion has turned out to be academic only, for the great powers have taken a hand in the island's destiny. Within a short space of time, the island communities were to disappear, possibly for ever, and we must look further afield to find the cause of this situation. In fact, to London and Washington.

Chapter Ten THE END OF AN ERA

In 1963, preliminary discussions were held between Britain and the United States. The subject - The Chagos Archipelago. Due to the impending loss of Aden and the possible eventual closure of Gan, the R.A.F. station in the Maldive Islands, the British Government was casting around for an alternative base in the Indian Ocean area. The Americans were also interested in establishing some sort of presence in the region - they had no facilities between Asmara in Ethiopia and the Philippines - and the discussions hinged upon the possible use of one of the Chagos Islands, preferably Diego Garcia, as a joint base.

It seems that some sort of decision, at least in principle, emerged from these talks, for when, in 1965, the then Colonial Secretary, Mr. Anthony Greenwood, travelled to Port Louis to negotiate Mauritian independence, the question of the Chagos Archipelago was again brought up. During these independence talks, it was agreed that Mauritius would give up all claim to the islands, which would then become part of the newly formed British Indian Ocean Territory, to be administered from the Seychelles. Britain is reported to have paid Mauritius 3 million pounds in compensation for the loss of sovereignty over the islands.

At this time, the Soviet Union was beginning to establish a large presence in the Indian Ocean. Many Russian warships were being sent into the area, operating from a base in Somalia, and both Britain and the United States were understandably concerned about this development. It was therefore decided to establish a joint communication facility at Diego Garcia, as a first step towards opposing Russian intentions, and plans were immediately put into effect to make the island available for this.

The British Government decided, in May, 1966, to resettle the population of the Chagos Archipelago in Mauritius. This, it was felt, would be in the interests of both the islanders and the respective military authorities. Accordingly, more than half a million pounds was paid to the Mauritius Government to be used for the resettlement of the islanders. In addition, the plantation company was bought out for just over a million pounds, the freehold of the islands then passing to the Commissioners of the British Indian Ocean Territory.

Between 1966 and 1971, the population of Diego Garcia gradually dwindled. As contracts expired, they were not renewed, so the workers returned to their respective homes in Mauritius and the Seychelles. The semi-native population was sent back to Port Louis and became the responsibility of the Mauritius authorities. At the same time, an agreement was signed between the British and United States Governments to the effect that Diego Garcia would 'remain available for defense purposes for fifty years'.

However, problems arose out of the plans to settle the islanders at Mauritius. Firstly, many of them fell ill, being in contact with the world's diseases for the first time in their lives. Some died from influenza, a particularly virulent form of which was sweeping the world at the time of their move. There were also some deaths from diphtheria, against which they had never been innoculated. Secondly, the cultural shock of moving from the atoll to the crowded and humid town of Port Louis induced a feeling of helplessness and resignation. Thirdly, Cyclone Gervaise struck Mauritius early in 1975, leaving 10,000 Mauritians homeless, and leaving the Mauritius Government in a dilemma; whether to first resettle the islanders, or rehouse their own people.

Towards the end of 1975, a row broke out in the British parliament concerning

the fate of the islanders. At about the same time, the Prime Minister of Mauritius, Sir Seewoosagur Ramgoolam, visited London to discuss the problem, and Britain promised to provide "expert technical assistance" and to "cooperate closely" with Mauritius to improve the situation. In October, 1975, some improvement appeared to have taken place, the Mauritius Government having rehoused some of the islanders, in addition to putting forward a plan to resettle the remainder on Agalega Island. This is the situation which exists at the time of writing. (January, 1976).

Meanwhile, the joint communication base at Diego Garcia has begun operation, and an airstrip has been built, connecting the island with Thailand by means of a twice weekly transport flight. Gradually, the face of the island is changing and although many relics of the past still remain, in time they will deteriorate and have to be preserved, thereby allowing the jungle to take over where the plantation village of East Point was located. Whether the island will ever be used again as a plantation is doubtful, for with the gradual introduction of substitutes, the world demand for copra will almost certainly fall and so the days of the plantation were probably numbered in any case. Hopefully, the islanders will be able to adjust to their new lives in Mauritius, which must surely, in the long run, provide better opportunities for themselves and their children to enjoy the many advantages of the world which they have hitherto missed during their time at Diego Garcia.

Chapter Eleven

THE ISLAND TODAY.

Since 1971, the population of Diego Garcia has been made up, for the most part, of officers and men of the United States and Royal Navies. A few civilians are also resident, being mainly construction experts and representatives of companies contracted to blast and dredge the many coral heads from the lagoon. The old centers of population, East Point and Point Marianne, are no longer inhabited, and most of the present day population live in what is known as the cantonment area at Eclipse Point. This consists of rows of wooden huts for the construction battalions, and new air conditioned barracks for the more permanent communication base personnel.

Very little interference with the local fauna and flora has taken place, the greater part of the island remaining in its natural state. Donkeys still roam over most of the atoll, and they are fairly common sight at night in the cantonment area. They are very timid and difficult to approach. At dawn, they return to the nearest patch of jungle, which is but a few yards away. The cats and chickens are brave by comparison, and wander openly around the area, taking little or no notice of the men living around them.

There is an abundance of birds on the island, of both land and sea varieties. The land birds include the Indian Mynah and the Madagascar Fody, and these, the most common species, are seen everywhere except in the densest jungle areas. It is worth noting that these two species were introduced by man and both thrive on the island. The Fody was the first to be introduced, probably in the early part of the nineteenth century, and for many years was the most common land bird on Diego Garcia. The male, with its bright red breeding plumage, which it wears from November to May, is an attractive sight. About the size of a small sparrow, it looks almost like a crimson flower when perched on the end of a branch. The Indian Mynah, on the other

hand, is a raucously noisy bird, of no particular beauty. Since being introduced in about 1953, it has replaced the Fody as the most common bird on the island. It scavenges in flocks around the cantonment area, and has been seen to attack quite large land crabs. In addition to this, it eats the chicks and eggs of other species and possibly even of its own kind. It may well become the only common land bird within a short space of time, as it gradually pushes out the other species.

The Cattle Egret is an even more recent introduction. Brought to the island from the Seychelles in 1955, it rapidly established itself at East Point, and by 1960, there were twenty-seven nests in one colony at the village. This white, clumsy looking, long legged and long necked bird, can often be seen standing on the backs of the donkeys, picking lice from them. It appears to be increasing in numbers, but only slowly, for it suffers in competition with the Mynahs.

Other introduced land birds include the Little Green Heron, the House Sparrow, the Madagascar Turtle Dove and the Barred Ground Dove, but none of these is common, and if there ever were any native species they have long since died out. Irregular visitors include swallows, House Martins, Crows and various Hawks, but these have invariably been blown to the island by storms, particularly during the northern monsoon. Flocks of ducks have been recorded on Barachois Sylvain, at the southern end of the atoll, but these are also rare visitors.

The varieties of sea-birds are too numerous to list. They include most of the common kinds of boobies and terns, together with various tropic and frigate brids. Many of these birds nest on the three small islands in the mouth of the lagoon, and quite often, huge flocks can be seen flying high above these islands, particulary when there are shoals of fish in the vicinity.

The most common animals on the atoll are undoubtedly the land crabs. There are three main species. The 'cipaye' or coconut crab is the largest in size and

also the rarest. It is a nocturnal creature, but has been reported to climb coconut trees during the day to seek shade. It is unusual in shape, having its legs and claws towards the front of the body, and tail-like appendage at the rear. The other two varieties of land crab are more common, and more crab-like in appearance. They are often seen around the cantonment area, even during the day. All the land crabs have one thing in common. They are armed with sharp, powerful claws, which are usually waved aggressively at any sign of danger. These claws can cause painful injuries to anyone foolish enough to put their fingers too close.

Fishermen and shell collectors who are posted to the island, find that they have everything they could wish for. The lagoon abounds in many varieties of fish, which are usually easily caught on rod and line. These include groupers, red-snappers and various kinds of shark. Shelling enthusiasts can pick up over ferent kinds of cowries alone, and most shells common to the Indo-Pa area inhabit the reefs of the island.

oint village is still intact, although crumbling and overgrown by jun[illegible] which quickly takes possession of open ground. Many of the men of the island enjoy occasional visits to the village, either by boat, or by vehicle, driven along the still existing plantation roads. The village seems to have a relaxing and restful atmosphere in comparison with the hustle and bustle of the cantonment area. Apart from the cantonment area itself, East Point village is still the largest group of buildings on the island. It is not the only reminder of the past, however. The ruins of Minni Minni and Point Marianne still exist, and in addition, the remains of thatched cottages at Camp Marcel, De Moulin, Carcasse, Balisage and Camp du Puits villages survive. Indeed, one of these cottages, at Camp Marcel, is still in use. The Royal Navy party on the island have converted it into a clubhouse, and decorated it

along the lines of a traditional English 'pub'. "The Ship', as the pub-type sign hanging outside identifies it, is the regular saturday night out for the British sailors and many of their American friends.

One more of the pre-communication base buildings is still in use. That is the meteorological office, standing on the edge of the lagoon, just to the north of East Point. It has beds and cooking facilities, and is used as a rest center for men wishing to take leave on the island.

The rest center does have one permanent resident, however, and that is Jenny. Jenny is a one year old donkey, who was born at the edge of the island's runway. Shortly after giving birth, her mother was frightened away by a visiting aircraft and never returned to her offspring. Jenny was adopted by the men who work at the airfield and nursed until she was strong enough to fend for herself. It was then realized that a tame donkey, wandering too close to the runway, might prove troublesome, so she was resettled at the rest center, where she gets regular human company, but also a chance to learn the ways of the wild. She greets all visitors very affectionately, especially if they bring her favorite items; apples, hamburgers, coca-cola and even the occasional can of beer.

This then is the story of Diego Garcia. A story of which really has no ending, for history is a continuing process. The island, though no longer used as a plantation, is useful for other purposes, and so men will continue to live and serve here for many years to come, and will continue to add to the story of this fascinating island which although British Territory serves two countries - "under Two Flags."

EXTRACT FROM REPORT BY LT CDR BERKLEY AND J. CALDWELL, COMMISSIONERS VISITING THE DEPENDENCIES. 28 JUNE 1859.

We anchored at minny minny on 20th June. The manager, M. Alexandre Minguy, acting for M. Louis Mazery came to the ship. The population is 35 men 8 women 9 boys 9 girls. There are 100 donkeys on the estate.

The estate is in excellent order with an abundant supply of food of first rate quality .

The next day we went to East point estate, belonging to Messrs. Lenard and managed by M. Emile Regnaud. This estate now includes the three marked on Moresby's chart as East point, Anse David and Widows estate. The population is 154 men 18 women 7 boys and 3 girls. There are 140 donkeys. This is the largest estate in the islands and the garden had tamarind, bois noir, bitter oranges, lemons, sugar cane and vanilla growing.

The next day we visited Point Marianne. The property of Messrs Leviux and Company, managed by M. Emile Barry. The population is 69 men 13 women 9 boys and 4 girls.

We would like to draw your attention to the great disproportion of sexes on the island. The managers themselves in general originated this delicate question, and we believe both managers and owners sincerely desire to amend it.

The island is healthy and abounds in all the necessities of life, and the inhabitants have nothing to desire.

REPORT OF CHARLES FARQUHARSON, DISTRICT AND STIPENDARY MAGISTRATE OF SEYCHELLES. APPOINTED COMMISSIONER BY THE GOVERNOR OF MAURITIUS 12th DECEMBER 1864.

Having arrived at Diego Garcia, I at once sent a notice and a copy of the proclamation to the Manager of each estate, giving intelligence of my arrival and of my intention of holding court two days after on the Marianne estate, having subsequently had cause to suspect that publicity had been withheld I decided upon visiting each estate successively, and am glad to testify to the most perfect harmony and tranquility reigning on the estates Marianne and Minni Minni. All the laborers of these two estates were unamimous in declaring themselves perfectly contented and well treated. A wholesome discipline appeared to pervade every department of these two magnificent plantations. I examined the books of the estates etc., the provision stores, shops, medicines, camps and was well satisfied with the results of my inspection.

I visited the East Point Estate on November 14 1864, and shortly after my arrival the whole of the laborers came in a body, and in a clamorous and disorderly manner asked to be taken aboard the Rapid stating that the manager, M. Houdet, used them very badly overworked them and did not feed them, etc. I soon found out the cause of these feelings towards the manager. I ascertained that this gentleman had only taken over the management of the estate a short time previously and had succeeded to a person who had to tolerate all kinds of abuses and license, which it had been his lot to reform . The measures M. Houdet had employed to reduce this unruly mob to a state of useful and wholesome discipline had raised the indignation of the most refractory, who vented their rage by exciting the quieter to raise the cry with which they met me. When called upon individually to frame their complaints only 14 out of about 180 could bring forward any thing that could bear listening to, and

out of these 14 cases, only three were substantiated, and even these were not very serious. Finally, I think that the manager's conduct must have been greatly influenced by his peculiar position, and that the deprivation of a proper authority to crush the spirit of insubordination in the bud. I imposed a fine in each case against the manager. On investigation into the treatment of the laborers in regard to food, lodgings and wages, I found that this estate was in no way behind the two others.

The population of Diego Garcia is as follows:

	MALES	267
	FEMALES	45
	CHILDREN	46
MANAGERS	FAMILIES	20
	total	378

REPORT ON THE LESSER DEPENDENCIES OF MAURITIUS BY E. PAKENHAM BROOKS
16th DECEMBER 1875

Mini Mini is the property of Mr. Mazery . The manager is Mr. D'Antoine. His predecessor was M. Minguay. At the entrance to the bay are three small islands 'Grand Barbe, Ile de Milieu and Ile de Passe.

The population of the island is ;

MALE	176
FEMALE	57
CHILDREN	68
Total	301

Point Marianne is owned by Messrs. Duverge and Co. and the Manager is Mr. Jardines who formerly practiced as an attorney-at-law in Mauritius. There was a mild outbreak of cholera here in October 1875, but there were no deaths. The dispensary is situated in front of the manager's house and is the deck house of a ship called the 'Shannon' which was wrecked some years ago at the entrance to the bay.

East Point Estate is owned by Messrs. Lienard brothers and is managed by Mr. James Spurs. I found many laborers who complained about their treatment at the hands of Mr. Spurs. There was a lot of crime on this estate and the manager had resorted to imprisoning laborers for long periods, sometimes unfairly. I fined the manager on three counts for inhumane behavior. There were several men who had been on the estate for between ten and twenty years and wished to stay indefinitely.

It is eleven years since the last magistrates visit, from now on there will be a permanent magistrate for the islands coming out, it is hoped yearly.

REPORT ON THE DEPENDENCIES OF MAURITIUS BY MR. J.H. ACKROYD ON MARCH 22, 1880

DIEGO GARCIA

I cannot find when it was discovered. It appears to have been visited in 1745 by the English ship 'Pelham', and subsequently by the French in 1769. The English tried to make a settlement there in 1784, but gave it up; and about this time an inhabitant of Mauritius obtained a concession of it, and it was made a kind of refuge for lepers. In 1792 an English merchant ship passed there and found some 8 or 10 of these afflicted creatures, and the captain actually abandoned two lascars of his crew who had, unfortunately for themselves, spent some jours with the lepers. The enjoyment of part of it was granted on 26th April 1809 and part of it on 2nd June 1809 to Messrs. Laportaire, Cayeux, and Didier and one of the conditions was that they should take care of the lepers, and not manufacture any oil, but send the coconuts to Mauritius. The present owners are Minni Minni - Mr. Mazery, East Point Mr. and Mrs. Lienard, Point Marianne - Messrs. Levieux, Lienard, Dauban and others.

On all the islands aquatic birds are numerous. The edible and Hawk's bill turtle exist but are scarce. Horned cattle do not thrive. There are some goats on Diego Garcia, and they do well. Except for the managers, sub managers and their families who are Europeans the population consists of Africans, creoles, and Malagashes. The work is generally carried out by task. 500 or 550 coconuts have to be picked up per day and husked, a task which is easily accomplished. The breaking and shelling are afterwards done by women who have to do 1500 per day each. The coconut after having been picked up and broken is dried in the sun and crushed in a mill of primitive construction,

consisting of a heavy wooden roller working in a hollow block of wood, the rollers being turned by donkeys or mules. Generally the men are in good health and frequently save from one quarter to one half of their wages. They live in good huts made of coconut leaves and having a wooden framework. Most of them grow pumpkins, bananas, and a fruit called the 'papaye' (paw-paw). There is however no provision made for the education or religious instruction of the laborers or their children; and great disproportion of women to men exists. This evil existed from the time of slavery. As regards the inspection of these islands and the administration of justice on them, with two exceptions there is no communication from one island to another.

Population of D. G. :

[illegible]	227
[illegible]LE	86
C[illegible]EN	87
[illegible]	400

EXTRACT FROM THE MARINERS MIRROR (JAN 70)
BRITISH SURVEYS IN THE CHAGOS ARCHIPELAGO AND ATTEMPTS TO FORM A SETTLEMENT AT DIEGO GARCIA IN THE LATE EIGHTEENTH CENTURY

In any discussion of the Anglo-French wars of the eighteenth century and the search for a naval base in the Indian Ocean, the Trincomalee, the Andamans and Penang. Rarely is there any mention of Diego Garcia or the Chagos Archipelago. For a time, however, Diego Garcia was considered by the British to occupy a position of strategic importance in the Indian Ocean and was considered to be a possible base for vessels sent to keep an eye on French activities at Mauritius. It was also thought to be a possible center for communications between vessels operating in Indian waters and felt to be ideally suited as a base for the exploration of the seas between Africa and India. For these reasons the story of the marine surveys carried out in the Chagos Archipelago and the attempted British settlement at Diego Garcia is worthy of attention.

Lying off the south-west coast of India are the Laccadives, the northernmost group of an extensive chain of islands, which consist of the Laccadives, the Maldives and the Chagos Archipelago. In this area there are thousands of islands of various sizes. Their existence had long been known to Europeans, but it was not until well into the nineteenth century that their extent and actual positions were determined with any degree of accuracy. The southernmost group of islands is the Chagos Archipelago, which contains some of the most remarkable atolls in the world. There are five distinct groups of coral islands, the Salomons, Banhos, The Three Brothers, the Egmont Islands and Diego Garcia. Diego Garcia, which is the largest of these islands, is a vast and complete horse-shoe-shaped ribbon of land just above sea-level and surrounding a lagoon lies one of the finest natural harbors in the world.

In the 1770's the Bombay government considered establishing a settlement at Diego Garcia. This was some 30 years after the French had begun to show an interest in exploring the islands in the southwestern part of the Indian Ocean, which served as "stepping stones to the East". Their interest was, in a sense, a byproduct of the Anglo-French wars of the first half of the eighteenth century. French exploration had begun in 1742, when Lazare Picault was sent with two vessels to examine the islands in the vicinity of Mauritius. On this expedition an island was supposedly discovered in the Chagos Archipelago, possibly one of the Three Brothers. In 1744, a second French expedition visited the Chagos Archipelago and the Perhos Banos were examined. These islands had been discovered earlier by the Portuguese and had appeared in charts of 1592 and 1595. In 1745 an English vessel had visited the area and Diego Garcia had been cursorily examined. Exploration of the Chagos Archipelago was continued in 1756, when a group of islands were discovered by De Surville. An English vessel, The Egmont, visited these islands in 1760, and since then they have been known as the Egmont islands. In 1766, the Salomon islands were discovered by Capt. Bourde. This French exploration continued intermittently until the 1770's and included an examination of the Seychelles, begun by Capt. M. Dufresne in 1768. This expedition also examined Diego Garcia, and the surveyor, Lt. La Fontaine, retunred the next year and surveyed the harbor at Diego Garcia. Many charts were produced and were used by M. d'Apres in his charts of the Indian Ocean. Eventually, these were replaced by more accurate English charts.

British vessels continued to visit the area on voyages to and from India, but it was not until 1756 that an attempt was made to explore the

islands south of the equator. In that year according to Alexander Dalyrimple, two men purchased a vessel in Bombay to examine the islands between the Maldives and Madagascar, but the Bombay government refused to allow them to sail. A number of plans of individual islands were later prepared by captains who chanced to pass near enough to attempt observations. Most of these plans were unreliable.

In 1770, Capt. Phillip Pittman informed the Bombay government that the French had occupied the Seuchells, which lie northeast of Madagscar and directly west of the Chagos Archipelago. The government, after considering Pittman's report, decided that they should have the islands between the Maldives and Madagascar explored. The sea in this area is studded with islands and reefs. There are some two thousand islands of various sizes in the Maldives alone. Although many of these dangers had been seen by various ships, few were placed in the charts anywhere near their true situations. Dalyrimple, in 1787, described many of these dangers as doubtful when they did in fact exist. Some of these islets, reefs and rocks were so small that, after their discovery by some vessel, they might not be seen again for years. Often the navigator who originally made the discovery would not take accurate observations as to the position of the danger and it would be placed in the charts incorrectly. Another navigator might pass over this spot and see nothing, thus giving rise to doubts as to the existence of the danger. It was not until the surveys of Capt. Robert Moresby of the Indian Navy and Capt. W. F. Owen, of the Royal Navy, in the nineteenth century, that almost all of these islands, reefs and rocks were finally charted accurately.

It was in 1771 that the Bombay government first decided to have these seas examined. Two vessels, the Drake and the Eagle, were dispatched with two surveyors, Lts. W. Robinson and D. Thomas of the Bombay Marine aboard. The decision to dispatch these vessels was made just before orders arrived from the Court of Directors demanding that such a survey be made. This decision of the Court of Directors was apparently also motivated by reports that the French had occupied the Seychelles and there were fears that they might occupy all the islands in the area. There are few records concerning this expedition, which seems to have been the first organized survey carried out by the officers of the Bombay Marine. The vessels visited the Seychelles Archipelago. On this expedition, a group of islands in the Chagos Archipelago, possibly the Egmont Islands were seen but were not examined. This expedition however, led to several further attempts to examine the islands in the south-western part of the Indian Ocean.

The second expedition sailed in May 1772 and consisted of two vessels, the Terrible and the Eagle. Several islands were visited before the vessels encountered a violent storm. The Terrible was so badly damaged that her commander, Lt. William Skynner, decided to return to India. The Eagle, which had fared better in the storm, continued the examination of several groups of islands in the Chagos Archipelago, including the Egmont Islands, the Bassas de Chagos and Perhos Banhos. Apparently Diego Garcia was not visited. A dispute between the Captain of the Eagle and the surveyor brought the survey to a close and the Eagle returned to Bombay. There the quarrel was renewed and ended in a duel in which the surveyor was killed. The captain was courtmartialed and the charts of the survey were never completed. Dalyrimple obtained two plans of the islands seen by the Terrible before she turned back.

One of these was drawn by Lt. Skynner. This plan differed from the second one and also differed by Lt. Skynner's journal. Dalyrimple hoped that the confusion surrounding these charts and those prepared by the surveyor of the Eagle would eventually be cleared up. There is no record that it ever was.

The Bombay governments interest in Diego Garcia was first stimulated by reports from Captain Thomas Heale, who visited the islands in 1772. Neale had been placed in command of the Swift and had been sent to examine several islands in the Strait of Sunda, between Java anc Sumatra. He was also to locate the Three Brothers and the Seven Brothers, supposedly part of the Chagos Archipelago. The Seven Brothers were protably the Egmont ISLAND seen by the Eagle in 1771 and 1772. Other vessels sent out from Bombay, also in 1771 and 1772, had searched for these islands in vain. There are no records concerning these expeditions.

Captain Neale was unable to find the islands in the Strait of Sunda. He then sailed from Bencoolen, on the west coast of Sumatra across the Indian Ocean and visited the Chagos Archipelago and the Seychelles. He determined roughly the location of many of the principal islands in the Chagos Archipelago. He found what he thought to be the Three Brothers, but his observations placed these islands in a situation far from that usually assigned to them in the charts. He was unable to locate the Seven Brothers and was unable to form any idea of the extent of the Archipelago. He visited Diego Garcia and entered the harbor and was impressed with its capabilities.

Because of their concern to have the surveys completed, and in view of the favorable reports of Captain Neale, the Bombay government decided to

form a small settlement at Diego Garcia. It might then be possible to keep the vessels in the area for longer periods before they would have to return to Bombay for supplies. As a preliminary to any actual settlement, Capt. Adam Sheriff was dispatched with the Drake, in 1774, to survey the island and to land sheep, goats and hogs. It was expected that the animals would multiply and a supply of meat would be available for the settlement and the vessels involved in the survey. Capt. Sheriff examined the island and prepared a report. Only a most cursory survey of the harbor could be made [illegible]his was completed by Lt. Dickinson, who prepared a rough plan. Both [illegible] impressed with the harbor and their report and chart were sent home [illegible] and, where they were left to gather dust. The idea of a settlement at Diego Garcia was abandoned at this time, possibly because of the Bombay government's struggle with the Marathas. The lack of interest in England was probably due to the quarrel with the American colonies, which soon led to the outbreak of the American revolution.

Nevertheless, the exploration of the islands in the southwestern part of the Indian Ocean continued. In July 1774, the Drake was again sent out. The orders to her commander were to explore the seas near the equator. The results of this survey were forwarded to the Court of Directors, but they were never published and are no longer available. Two years later, in 1776, the Success was sent to Johanna in the Comoro islands, which are situated in the center of the northern entrance to the Mozambique channel. The Success was commanded by Lt. W. Robinson, who was ordered to take presents to the King of Johanna, who had assisted the survivors of a wrecked Indiaman. Lt. Robinson was also ordered to "make sure Nautical remarks and Observations in the course of his voyage as might be of use in the Navigation of those seas".

He supposedly constructed charts of "some remarkable Lands they fell in with" but these charts were never published and can no longer be located. Apparently, one group of islands which they visited was the Chagos Archipelago. Dalyrimple published a chart of an island in this Archipelago, which was constructed by Lt. Ringrose during this voyage of 1776, and for many years, the Chagos Archipelago was ignored.

Nine years later, the Board of Control, led by Henry Dundas began to take an interest in the islands of the Indian Ocean. If war was to break out again with France, bases were necessary in the Indian Ocean, and all possible sites were to be examined. Diego Garcia was one of the islands under consideration. The board had examined the old charts and reports. They were apparently impressed with Dickinson's plan and Capt. Sheriff's report, prepared in 1774, and they wanted to know whether or not Diego Garcia could be easily fortified and defended. If this was possible, the island could be used for the shelter and refreshment of warships. It may also have been considered as a possible base for vessels sent to spy on Franch activities at Mauritius.

The Bombay government was therefore instructed to send two small vessels to take possession and occupy the island of Diego Garcia. An exact survey was to be made of the harbor and island and a detailed report was to be prepared on the produce of the island, the best means of settling it and the fortifications necessary to defend it. The officers chosen from the Bombay Marine, who were to man the two vessels, were to be competent marine surveyors and were "to examine and ascertain the situation of the numerous Sands and Islands in that part of the sea, and an accurate knowledge of these hitherto much neglected seas is essential to the security and

Navigation of the Company's Ships". A number of chronometers were sent out to be used by the surveyors along with lunar observations to ascertain the "relative position of Shoals and Islands".

The Bombay government either misinterpreted these instructions or else they were over-anxious to please officals in England. They immediately began to prepare a large and costly expedition, which, although organized on a grand scale, was to suffer from inefficient and disorganized preparations. Not enough food was sent for the number of men involved. Building supplies were forgotten. For some reason the marine surveyors never received the chronometers sent out for their use. Lt. A. Blair later complained that they would have been very useful in making his surveys more accurate.

The Governor of Bombay, Rawson Hard Boddam, selected the men to lead the expedition. In over-all command was a civilian, Richard Thomas Benjamin Price, who was to remain in charge of the settlement to be established at the island. The civilian establishment consisted of Mr. Price; an assistant named Smith, or Smyth; a writer, William Groughton; a sergeon, Joseph James; and an assistant surgeon, John Price. There were 41 craftsmen sent to the island and some 69 servants. Command of the military part of the expedition was given to Capt. John Conrad Sartorius of the Engineers who was considered "a man of good sense and sound judgement as well as an excellent officer". Sartorius was to be commanding officer, surveyor and engineer. He was to be in charge of all surveys and was to be assisted in the land surveys by Lt. Emmitt and Ensign George Sobsey. The marine surveyors were also to be responsible to Sartorius. A large military detachment, consisting of Artillery, Engineers, lascars and Sepoys, were to accompany the expedition. Sartorius had under his command two Artillery officers, two Engineer officers and 155 soldiers, mainly Sepoys and Lascars.

The govenor decided to select the Bombay Marine officers "from those Gentelmen in the Marine, who have established any talents for surveying, drawing and nautical observations". It was expected that the expedition would give them the opportunity of "improving such valuable accomplishments", so that the Marine would have officers qualified to carry out future surveys. In charge of marine surveys was Lt. Archibald Blair, who had completed surveys on the coast of India. Blair's chief assistant was Lt. John Wales, who had also taken part in surveys in Indian waters. Wales later became the first Marine Surveyor General of India.

Before the vessels sailed, Price was given detailed instructions. He was the only one allowed to know the destination of the expedition for fear something might leak out to the French. He was therefore first of all cautioned to maintain secrecy at all times and under no circumstances was he to allow copies of any surveys, remarks or observations to be given to anyone without the express permission of Bombay. The destination of the expedition was kept secret in India and after the vessels sailed all the newspapers were able to report was that the vessels had sailed for an unknown destination where a colony was to be established.

Price was informed that the English had first discovered Diego Garcia and that this had been acknowledged by M. D'Apres in his chart of the Indian Ocean. Price was not to let "any straggling French who may accidently be there, without authority or any settlement of that nature or any post, or pillar or such like trifling mark of Possession (left there with an Evil design to restrict other National profiting from the situation) as being any impediment to his occupying the island and establishing a settlement. If, however, it was found that the French had formed an

establishment there and could only be removed by force, he was to return to Bombay, making no effort to dislodge them. He was, however, to send a fast vessel to the Cape of Good Hope with dispatches for England, informing the Board of Control of any such French occupation. If any foreign vessel was to visit the island while the expedition was there, they were to be treated with every vivility and given every assistance possible. But they were not to be allowed to enter the harbor at Diego Garcia.

The expedition arrived safety at Diego Garcia in April 1786. On entering the harbor by its principle entrance, the vessels discovered a number of shoals which made this entrance dangerous, especially for navigators unfamiliar with the area. All the men and stores were landed immediately and construction of quarters and a warehouse begun. A few French settlers were found on the but they soon departed for Mauritius to inform the governor of the ac f the English.

C Sartorius soon issued his preliminary instructions to Lt. Blair. He was : rst to examine the harbor at Diego Garcia, and second to begin a careful survey of the coast of the island. The work was then to be extended to other islands in the vicinity.

The construction of the buildings continued and the climate was found to be healthy. Sartorius, however, was soon complaining about the inadequacies of the stores and the absence of building materials on the island. There was also a shortage of food, which in part was the result of the expeditions having to feed the survivors of the Atlas, an Indiaman wrecked on the island soon after their arrival. Price added his complaints and expressed the belief of both Sartorius and himself that to form a permanent settlement at Diego Garcia would entail considerable expense on the part of the East India Company.

Price felt that the island would never prove useful as a port for the refreshment of vessels as nothing seemed to grow there. Earlier attempts by the French to introduce crops had ended in failure. There was also no trace of the sheep, goats and hogs landed by Capt. Sheriff in 1774. The only value the island seemed to have was that it was ideally suited as a base for carrying out the exploration of the seas in that vicinity.

Early in May 1786 Price issued further orders to Sartorius. He was to have the detailed survey of the harbor completed immediately. There was some disagreement between the two men and Sartorius informed Price that this work more properly fell to Lt. Blair, Sartorius and Lt. Emmitt were busy at this time trying to erect a warehouse. Price felt that Sartorius and his assistants should help in the marine surveys. He had been informed before he left Bombay that everyone who could possibly be of assistance in the surveys was to be employed until the work was completed.

The instructions for the completion of the harbor surveys were issued on May 7th. Price had been instructed to have the surveys finished quickly and to send the results to Bombay on the Admiral Hughes, which was to return no later than May 29th. It was impossible for Blair to complete the work in the time allotted Price was also to prepare a report, based on Sartorius' observations and land surveys, on the capabilities of the island and the difficulties of fortifying it. Sartorius protested. He claimed that it was impossible to have either the land surveys on the May 20th. Since the Bombay government might decide to occupy or abandon the island on the basis of these reports, Sartorius was unwilling to hazard his reputation by submitting reports based on insufficient information. Price therefore decided to detain the Admiral Hughes until the reports were complete. As a result, the vessel was not ready to sail until late in June.

In the meantime, Lt. Blair was given more detailed instructions. He was first to determine whether there were any difficulties in entering the harbor by the principle entrance other than those already discovered; secondly, whether the principle passage could be used by ships of any size and what season would be best for ships to enter and leave the harbor; thirdly, he was to ascertain the size of the small islands in the mouth of the harbor and near it; fourthly, he was to determine the best place for ships to lie at anchor; fifthly, he was to construct an exact plan of the inside of the harbor; and lastly, he was to leave markers at all the principle points; these markers were to serve as stations for a more complete survey of the island at a later date. Blair was originally to have approximately six days to complete this work. This was typical of the instructions issued for early surveys carried out by the Bombay Marine. Rarely did government officials have any idea of the difficulties involved in surveying and of the amount of time necessary for a surveyer to prepare accurate charts. There were few qualified surveyors and they usually had to rely on assistance from officers who had little interest in their work.

In July 1786 the Admiral Hughes arrived back in Bombay with reports from Price, Sartorius and Blair. All these reports were unfavorable. Blair had completed a cursory examination of the harbor at Diego Garcia and had left markers at all the principal points for the later, more detailed survey. In this task he had been assisted by Lts Wales and Hardy and officers and boats from the two transports. Blair had discovered that Diego Garcia did not have a good harbor for large vessels. There were several entrances to the lagoon and all but one were inaccessible to large vessels, as they were partially blocked by large shoals, while the lagoon was dotted with coral heads.

The island was also found to be unsuitable for a settlement. Sartorius claimed that it could only be fortified at a great expense, and that it would be difficult to defend. "Our situation", he wrote, "is so remote from India and our wants of almost every article for building with the levelness and flatness of the Island in every part, are convincing proof that it cannot be made defensible but at an immense expense". All stores and food would have to come from Bombay, which meant that it would be difficult to maintain a garrison at Diego Garcia, especially during wartime. The chief advantage of the island was its situation as a base for carrying out surveys of the seas to the north and northeast of Madagascar.

The reports on the suitability of the Experiment as a survey vessel were also unfavorable. Blair found that the vessel did not live up to the expectations of the Bombay Government. The vessel was too small and was completely unsuitable for deep-sea sounding. Blair had found the Viper a more reliable vessel for most of the work. While awaiting the Government's reaction to these reports, Sartorius had Blair continue his examination of the other islands in the Chagos Archipelago.

The Government took all the reports and surveys into consideration. Their response was predictable. They felt the Court of Directors and the Board of Control would never consider a settlement which offered "no other apparent advantage, than that of being a fit situation for exploring", and could "neither be maintained, fortified or defended without an enormous and continued expense. They were cautious, however, and decided not to abandon the settlement, but to reduce it.

The Government were well pleased with Blair's efforts. They felt that much had been accomplished in a short time. Blair was to complete his survey of Diego Garcia and to carry on his examination of the other islands, as Sartorius had instructed him. He received assistance from Lts. Wales, Hardy and Drummond

and Volunteers Haswell and Roper. Without their assistance he would never have been able to complete the surveys so quickly. He was already continuing his work and he soon found that Diego Garcia had another disadvantage - it could not be used during the Southwest monsoon, as it was almost impossible to leave the harbor. In late July, Blair had tried several times to continue his examination of the island and had been forced to turn back.

The orders that the settlement was to be reduced were carried to Diego Garcia by Bombay, commanded by Captain James Sutherland. It sailed in August 1786. By the time dispatches had been received in India ordering the completion of further surveys on the west coast of India and of the islands to the southwest. A number of instruments, including two pocket chronometers, one box chronometer and several azimuth compasses, had arrived for this purpose. Captain Sutherland requested that he be allowed to take these instruments with him in order to make observations. Permission was granted and he was instructed to determine, on his return voyage, the relative positions of the Laccadives, Minicoy and the Maldives. It would have been better if the governor had instructed Sutherland to turn the instruments over to Blair for use in his surveys. Blair had remarked several times how useful chronometers would have been in his work. This, however, was not ever considered. It appears that these instruments were reserved for the surveys to be completed on the west coast of India. They were later used for this purpose when Lt. John McCleur commenced his surveys.

Captain Sutherland completed his voyage to Diego Garcia and on his return to Bombay, in October 1786, he returned the instruments. He had made quite a number of observations, but had failed to determine the relative positions of the various island groups as he had been instructed. There is no evidence of his having prepared a chart.

While Blair's surveys continued, reports concerning the settlement had reached the Governor-general in Bengal. In November 1786 he ordered the immediate withdrawl of the settlement. Similiar orders were issued by the Court of Directors in January 1787. They were annoyed with the Bombay Government. They had never intended a large civil and military establishment at the island, nor did they intend such a large expediture of money. The government's actions were criticized as was their failure to adequately provision the expedition.

The Court of Directors, nevertheless, felt that Diego Garcia was of considerable strategic importance and its use as a base for carrying on further surveys was approved. It was considered essential that a detailed knowledge of the seas in that area should be obtained. The currents in this area also required study. Near the islands the currents had many varitions and it was easy for navigators, who were unaware of the perculiarities of these currents to be carried onto reefs and shoals. The task of exploring the islands was to be shared by the Bombay Marine vessels not needed elsewhere, and at least two vessels were to be stationed at the island for the purpose of determining the positions of all shoals, banks and islands, so that accurate charts could be constructed. Once more, the governor was instructed to select the most able officers in the Bombay Marine, who were to be supplied with instruments, including chronometers.

French reaction to the attempted formation of a settlement at Diego Garcia was not long in coming. The men who had been at the island when the vessels arrived from Bombay had returned to Mauritius and had informed the governor of what was happening. He prepared a letter protesting the formation of the settlement at a time when the Courts of Versilles and London, endeavor to

secure by a commercial treaty the reconciliation and friendship reestablished between them by the peace of 1783, and at a time when a French settlement was already established there. He demanded the withdrawl of the settlement and claimed that the French had formed an establishment there in 1770 and that, since 1778, French occupation of the island had been continuous.

By the time this letter reached Bombay the decision to remove the settlement had already been made. Governor Boddam therefore informed the governor of Mauritius that the island did not suit their purpose and would be abandoned. He stated nevertheless, that the English had discovered the island in 1712 long before the French. The Chagos Archipelago had in fact been discovered by the Portuguese in 1512, but they had not occupied any of the islands. The English [illegible]een next to visit the islands in 1712. After this, both French and English [illegible] had visited the islands frequently, but it was only after the French ha[illegible]n occupying islands in the southwestern part of the Indian Ocean that the E[illegible]lish had shown any interest in Diego Garcia. After the withdrawal of the British settlement from the island a few French settlers did return.

While the fate of the settlement was being decided, Blair, assisted by Wales and Hardy, continued his surveys. The work was terminated in February 1787 because Blair's vessels were required to carry troops from Diego Garcia back to India. Blair was instructed to use this opportunity to determine the relative positions of the Laccadives, Minicoy and the Maldives, the task Captain Sutherland had failed to complete a few months before.

During the evacuation of the troops, Blair was able to complete further observations and constructed a chart which would enable navigators to avoid the dangers of the Chagos Archipelago. For many years this Archipelago had been considered a great danger to navigators attempting the Middle or Southern Passage

to and from India. The extent of the islands had never been established and they had appeared in old charts under various names such as the Bassas de Chagos and Ady and Candy. Navigators had occasionally seen one or more of these islands, but no exact positions had ever been determined for any of them. Dalyrimple, in 1786 complained of the confusion surrounding these islands because of the practice of applying "different names to the same islands and the same names to different islands". Blair felt that his charts would make navigation in the seas around the Chagos Archipelago much safer. In setting out his surveys, Blair had carried many old charts with him. All had been proven inaccurate, especially some French charts. Blair found that many of the islands shown in these charts did not exist, at least not anywhere near the positions assigned to them.

Blair had accurately determined the positions of the Six Island, Eagle Islands, the Three Brothers, Peros Banhos, Speakers Bank, Diego Garcia and the Salomon Islands (which he named Governor Boddam's Islands), as well as many smaller dangers. He had also collected considerable information concerning the currents around the islands. Two islands, Ady and Candy, which had been sought after for years, were considered by him to be the Governor Boddam Islands. These islands, together with the numerous banks and shoals in the area, constituted the notorious Bassas de Chagos, much feared by navigators using the Middle Passage. Dalyrimple claimed that this passage had fallen into disuse because of the fear of imaginary dangers between the Saya de Malha Bank and the Chagos Archipelago. Blair had proven that many of these dangers did not exist and others were correctly placed in the charts for the first time. Unfortunatley, not all the islands were examined carefully. The examination of one had to be cut short when the water supply ran low, another because of strong winds and currents,

which threatened to wreck the vessels. Much valuable time had also been lost when the Experiment had lost her foremast and to be towed for two weeks.

Where possible, Blair had used rough triangulation in his surveys. His angles and bearings were all taken with an azimuth compass and a new improved sextant. Occasionally, bases were measured on short, but more frequently they were calculated by trigonometry. When this was done he used a second and sometimes a third base to verify his work. Although chronometers had been sent to Bombay, supposedly for this survey, they were never given to Blair, who relied on observations of lunar distances for determining longitudes. "I regretted exceedingly", he wrote, "the want of good Chronometers, which would have rendered this survey more correct than I possibly can by the strictest attention to lunar observations, for though they are entirely serviceable in lo[illegible]ages, they are by no means equal to chronometers for the correction of s[illegible]stances". Blair's longitudes were determined from the mean of fifty-[illegible]ets of observations.

Blair [illegible]s unable to determine the relative positions of the other islands because the supply of drinking water ran low due to the number of troops aboard his vessel. This task was not completed until the surveys of Moresby and Powell in the 1830's. One thing Blair was able to do on his return voyage was to determine that the Maldives extended much further to the south than had been previously supposed and that their extent from east to west was not one third of what was shown in most charts. He also collected information on the currents in the Maldives.

The Court of Directors expected that the Bombay Government would continue to use Diego Garcia as a base for further surveys. However, after Blair's return to Bombay this work ceased. Surveys were in progress on the west coast

of India and these were extended to the Gulf of Mannar. In addition, vessels and surveyors were needed in the Bay of Bengal. Because of these surveys, the Bombay Government were unable to supply vessels and surveyors to continue the examination of the southwestern part of the Indian Ocean.

In 1788, Alexander Dalyrimple published Blair's charts and observations. All the details concerning the surveys were not forwarded to Dalyrimple and he found that in all cases the reports did not agree with the charts. He accused Blair of carelessness. In 1786, Dalyrimple had published his memoir on the Chagos Archipelago in the hope that it may fall in the hands of navigators who could supply additional information. Although incomplete, Blair's charts and observations had clarified many of the points Dalyrimple had raised. He had completed the first general survey of the Chagos Archipelago. Although the charts produced were not constructed with the precision which came to be expected of surveyors serving in the Bombay Marine or Indian Navy in the 1820's and 1830's, they were sufficiently accurate to enable navigators to avoid most dangers and were far more accurate than any charts of this area previously published.

Diego Garcia was visited again in 1789 by Lt. Robert Morrsom of the Royal Navy on orders from the Board of Control and Commodore Cornwallis. Moorsom had received detailed instructions from the Board of Control before he left England in 1788 to join the East Indies Squadron. These instructions emphasized the importance, in case of future wars with rance, of ascertaining the most proper situations for the shelter, refitting, refreshment or protection of squadrons, and ships of war as well as convoys, or East India Ships, during the different seasons, under various circumstances'. All places 'which had hitherto appeared worthy of consideration', or which the governor general might require

information on, were to be carefully examined. Although attention was soon to be concentrated on ports and harbors near the Bay of Bengal, Diego Garcia was to be the first object of attention. There was no intention of using this island as an arsenal or 'General Rendezvous' as had been mistakenly assumed by the Bombay Government in 1786, but it was hoped that the island could be used as a place of rendezvous for detached ships of the East India Squadron, that small quantities of naval stores could be kept there, and possibly refreshments procured there.

Moorsom was to determine the case and convenience of access during the various seasons; whether fortifications were necessary and if log forts could be constructed so as to make the harbor defensible against an enemy squadron. He was informed that 'the idea of rendering that place useful was totally mistaken by the people sent from Bombay' in 1786. They also wanted to know whether the entrance to the harbor was safe for ships 'in some degree crippled' and needing shelter; whether or not it was a useful place for the governments of India to send information to, so that any squadron going to India could be met by a fast frigate and the squadron commander given information which would enable him to deploy his vessels with the least loss of time; and whether naval stores, such as anchors, topmasts, cables, etc., could be stored there. These naval stores were to be used by vessels operating in the Coromandel Coast and in the Bay of Bengal. It was hoped that by leaving stores at Diego Garcia this would do away with the necessity of vessels returning to Bombay for such supplies. If Moorsom felt the necessary fortifications could be erected from the materials left at the island by the expedition of 1786, he was to prepare a detailed plan and forward it to the Board of Control for their consideration.

In addition to the orders from the Board of Control, Cornwallis wanted to know whether or not Diego Garcia could be used as a center for communications between the presidencies of India. Moorsom carried out his examination of the island in the summer of 1789. He relied on Blair's charts, which he found to be accurate. He felt it would be possible for vessels to use the harbor at Diego Garcia and that they would be sheltered from almost all winds. In spite of the coral rocks in the lagoon, Moorsom felt that it was safe for vessels of all sizes. He also disagreed with Captain Sartorius. Although not an engineer, he felt that sea forts could be constructed at little expense and that naval stores could be stored there. He also considered Diego Garcia to be ideally situated as a place where a squadron commander, on his way out from England, could obtain information as to which coast of India most required the presence of his vessels. Reinforcements could also stop at Diego Garcia to find out where the squadron was operating so that they could join it without any unnecessary waste of time. No refreshments, other than water, could be procured at the island and it did not appear to be suitable as a center for communications between the various presidencies of India. Moorsom, however, felt that it was conveniently situated as a center for communication between India and a settlement in Sumatra or the Eastern Islands.

Soon after Moorsom made his report, Cornwallis lost interest in Diego Garcia, and although frequently visited by vessels, the island ceased to interest either the East India Company or the Admiralty. By the time that war broke out again with France, Penang had become the chief harbor of importance for the East India Squadron. On the conclusion of the Napoleonic wars, Ceylon, with its fine harbor at Trincomalee, was retained by the English, as was Mauritius. Trincomalee became

the chief base for the Royal Navy in the Indian Ocean and Mauritius served as a base for controlling activiites among the islands in the southwestern part of the Indian Ocean. There was no longer any need for a settlement or supply base at Diego Garcia.

The Chagos Archipelago was therefore virtually ignored until 1837, when Captain Robert Moresby of the Indian Navy extended his survey of the Maldives to include the first complete trigonometrical survey of the Chagos Archipelago. This survey resulted in the construction of new accurate charts which replaced those of Blair, which had been in use for approximately sixty years.

EXTRACT FROM "STATISTICS OF THE ISLES OF MAURITIUS" (UNDATED) (Circa 1810)
Translated from French by D. Melville

At this time, a Mauritius man, M. le Normand, obtained permission to settle on Diego Garcia. He was given the full concession for the island.

Despite this, another man, M. Danguet, settled on the island. M. Danguet was ordered by the Mauritius authorities to build a refuge for lepers. This idea was prompted by the extreme isolation of the island, but also because it was considered at the time that the clean air and fresh sea-food would be beneficial to the lepers.

In 1793, another man, M. Laportaire, was given permission to establish a factory to extract oil and copra from the coconuts, using the so-called Indian method. By the time Captain-General de Caen was installed in Mauritius, three establishments had sprung up on the island. Discussions were held between Mauritius and the three proprietors. The latter convinced Mauritius of the great advantages that exploitation of the island provided. The Captain-General signed three agreements on May 2nd, 1809 and Laportaire, Cayeux and Dider were accorded jurisdiction over the island. The limits of their respective establishments were defined and each had a quota of lepers imposed upon them who would be sent to the island by the Mauritius authorities. Things have remained unchanged ever since.

Apart from the oil and fish, which are both in great abundance on Diego Garcia, sea-cucumbers are exported to Batavia (Java), where the Chinese have a secret method of preparing them and they have become a major article of commerce.

The 'black' workers are able to knock birds out of trees with the aid of a long rod, and catch fish at night, which they attract with burning torches, and these together with the coconuts and cereals make for an abundance of food,

which leads to a high standard of living. Their dwellings are supplied by the proprietors.

Another source of food is the 'cipaye' crab which is large and has very strong claws. Also, hermit crabs are eaten in large numbers. For a long time these two crustaceans were thought to be peculiar to Diego Garcia, but they have since been found on the other islands in the Archipelago.

CORAL ISLANDS

The low islands have been formed by the coral ployp, which builds only in calm, clear, warm and comparatively shallow salt water. In the open ocean, coral islands rise from submarine ridges and peaks whose summits are not far below the surface. As the polypn cannot build above sea-level, newly formed islands are almost awash. But gradually blocks of coral, broken by the waves, are piled up on the surface, thus increasing the height, until in time the island reaches an elevation of 10-12 feet, and in the case of old islands as much as 30 feet above sea level.

Atolls are belts of coral, often more than a mile wide, circular, oval and sometimes triangular in shape, which enclose expanses of water called Lagoons. These lagoons generally, though not always, have an entrance – often deep enough to allow the passage of large ships - on the side opposite the prevailing winds. They vary in size. Some are less than a mile in diameter, but others are quite large, one in the Marshall Islands measuring 100 miles across.

Coral is a limestone deposit formed by the accumulation of the skeletal shells of coral polyps - minute sea organisms. The reef building coral is limited in its distribution for it can only flourish under the following circumstances:

1. The sea temperature must be about 70 degrees F. Such a sea temperature is rarely found beyond 30N and 30S. Within these limits ocean temperatures are higher on the east of continents than on the west, hence coral islands are usually found off the Eastern coasts of continents within the tropics.

NOTE - This is because ocean currents travel anti-clockwise in the southern hemisphere, so to the east of the continents, warm water is flowing south, and to the west, cold water is flowing north. Because most of the land masses are

18. SETTLEMENT AND DEVELOPMENT OF DIEGO GARCIA

D. R. Stoddard

A. Discovery

The islands of the Chagos Archipelago were probably discovered and named by Portuguese navigators sailing from the Cape of Good Hope to Goa in the first two decades after Vasco da Gama pioneered the route in 1498; but it was more than two hundred years from their discovery before the positions of the Chagos and other islands were reasonably determined. Clusters of islands probably representing the Chagos appear on Alberto Cantino's world map of 1502; but though Addu Atoll at the southern end of the Maldives as clearly marked on Joan Martine's chart of 1578, the islands to the south remained schematic (Bagrow 1964, Skelton 1958). Generally, navigators sought to avoid the maze of islands and short steep seas of the Great Chagos Bank, which had no trading importance compared with the factories of India and, later, the colonies of the Mascarenes. The standard histories of the Indian Ocean contain little but conjecture for this early period (Toussaint 1961).

The Mascarene Islands, which had been discovered in 1505, were not permanently settled until the seventeenth century, and the Ile de France itself (Mauritius) was not formally annexed by France until 1717. During the century after 1734, when Mahe de la Bourdonnais became governor of the Ile de France and Bourbon Reunion), the French systematically explored the islands to the north, from time to time clashing with the nglish. The first major voyage of discovery was that of Lazare Picault, who visited Peros Banhos Atoll in the Elizabeth in 1744. Picault's journals have not been published in full, though parts are available (Fauvel 1909). British ships visited the Chagos islands in 1719 (Stranger) and 1728 (Grantham), and Diego Garcia itself in 1745 and 1755 (Pelham and Mary,

respectively). Growing rivalry between France and England led to a re-appraisal of the value of these remote islands. In September 1769, a more thorough survey was made of Diego Garcia by the French ships L'Heure du Berger (Chevalier Grenier) and Vert Galant (Lt. La Fontaine), and in 1770 La Fontaine made the first survey of the Diego Garcia lagoon. He reported that "a great number of vessels might anchor there in safety; but the principle object is wanting: for though it is covered with woods, it is not provided with fresh water" (quoted by Scott 1961, 68; Unieville 1838, 182). These observations, together with those of the Abbe Rochon (1793) and of the hydrographer D'Apres de Mannevillette (1775), led to a much more detailed understanding of the topography of the central and western Indian Ocean (Figure 33), which is reflected in charts from about 1780 onward (e.g. Grant 1801).

The dangers associated with navigation in these seas are vividly illustrated by the fact that the hydrographer James Horseburgh was himself wrecked on Diego Garcia in the Atlas on 30 May 1786. "The charts on board were very erroneous in the delineation of the Chagos Islands and Banks," explained Horsburgh (1809, 132), "and the commander trusting too much to dead reckoning, was steering with confidence to make Ady or Candy (which do not exist) for a new departure, being in their longitude nearly, by account, and bound to Ceylon; but, unfortunately, a cloud over Diego Garcia prevented the helmsman from discerning it (the officer of the watch being asleep) til we were on the reef close to the shore; the masts, rudder, and everthing above deck, went with the first surge; the second lifted the vessel over the outer rocks, and threw her in toward the beach."

B. Early Settlement

The French did not try to settle on Diego Garcia, and the first attempt to do so, in 1786, was by the English, who wished to use the atoll as a victualling station. Six shiploads of soil were sent from Bombay by the East India Company, in the hope of growing vegetables and cereals, but the experiment was a failure. Documents concerning the planning of this expedition by the Bombay Council, including a diary kept by the leader, R. Price, on Diego Garcia between 29 April and 24 September 1786, are preserved in the Bombay Secretariat Record Office (Secret Department, Vols. 33A, 1-77; 34, [illegible]; 35, 10-11, 133-139, 195-215; 36, 395-7; 39, 177-208, 223-4, 327-47; [illegible]). By the time the French heard of the attempted settlement, and [illegible] frigate Minerve from Mauritius to deal with it, the English expedition has [illegible]n. Magon de Medine on arrival formally reasserted the French claim to the atoll. The French made no settlement, and again the English returned, Lt. Archibald Blair of the East India Company Marine making a survey in 1786.

French settlement began in the late 1780's, when a M. Le Normand was authorized by Depuit de la Faye to settle at Diego Garcia and to supply coconuts to the Ile de France. In 1793 this was taken a step further, when M. Lapotaire was given permission to establish a factory at Diego Garcia to export copra and oil rather than whole nuts to the Ile de France. He began by taking two ships, each with 25-30 men, and slaves, to the atoll; and in 1794 he exported 900 veltes of oil (about 1350 gallons or 6100 litres). A few years later he was joined by brothers named Cayeux in the same business.

This profitable enterprise attracted others, however. Two new factors, Blevec and Chepe, appeared making oil in a very wasteful way. In 1808, Lapotaire

petitioned the captain-general of the Ile de France with new proposals. He suggested that the two sides of the atoll be allotted to him, and the southern part to Cayeux. No other factors would be allowed. He also proposed the prohibtion of oil manufacture on the atoll, on the ground that it provided too great temptation to the English, instead, copra would be sent to mills in the Ile de France. On 26 April 1809, however, the captain-general gave Blevee and Chepe authority to exploit the eastern part of the atoll, while at the same time prohibiting oil manufacture. These grants were subject to cancellation on failure to replant coconuts, and the concessionaires were also to be responsible for the care of any lepers sent to Diego Garcia from the Ile de France. It had been intended that these lepers would live only on the small islets, but this was not adhered to. The population of the atoll at this time totalled 275, including 37 lepers (Moreau 1827).

C. The Plantations under the English

On 3 December 1810 the Ile de France capitulated to the English, and although at the treaty of Paris in 1814 several territories, including Bourbon, reverted to France, this did not apply to the Ile de France and its dependencies (including Diego Garcia), which remained under British Administration (Treaty of Paris, 30 May 1814, Article 8; proclamation in Mauritius 15 December 1814). The coconut concessions on Diego Garcia continued, but the English policy of ending the slave trade and finally (1839) of abolishing slavery led to problems in the plantations. Discontent of Diego Garcia among both slaves and lepers led to the appointment of the first government agent, M. Le Camus in 1824. In addition to administration, he was concerned to provide pilotage for visiting ships, and also with the construction of a lazarette on one of the small islands. New surveys were carried out at this time, by Col. E. A. Draper, who mapped Lapotaire's concession on the west side in detail (1824), and by W. and C. T.

hulks anchored off East Point and Minni Minni, and Orient also had yards on shore at East Point. At the time of the Magistrate's visit in 1883 there was a stock of 15,000 tons of coal at the atoll, two-thirds of it belonging to Orient. The target of the operators was to fuel 180 ships a year, each turning around in 24-68 hours; passengers were not allowed to go ashore.

The following year, 1884, Orient moved from East Point. Its hulks were moved closer to the lagoon entrance, at Barton Point. The Company leased the small islets, Middle Island for Spurs as agent, and East Island for Ivanoff. Already there were considerable labor troubles, and also problems arising from the passage of large emigrant ships, many of whose passengers managed to get ashore. Ivanoff Dupont, the magistrate, was kept busy with incidents (Scott 1961). In November 1885, a police post had to be established at Minni Minni, consisting of two officers and six men, to keep order, but there was constant squabbling between the Mauritius Government and London over payment of the costs involved. With the British Government unwilling to pay, the Mauritius Government finally revoked the arrangement. G. C. Bourne gives an interesting insight into the nature of the labor problems during his visit in 1886: "Mr. Leconte told me that on his arrival on the island three years ago, he found the Negroes in a most insubordinate condition, and that within a month of his landing, his veranda was besieged by a body of thirty men, armed with knives and bludgeons, who declared that they would not leave the place until they had taken his life. Luckily for him they were as cowardly as they were insolent, and he was able to keep them at bay by presenting a revolver, until he had succeeded in reducing them to a more reasonable state of mind" (Bourne 1886b, 398-390).

The coaling stations again focused attention on the strategic value of

Diego Garcia, for the first time since the East India Company's foray in 1786. In February 1884, Lund made a proposal to the Mauritius Government for a mail service from Mauritius to Colombo, linking at Diego Garcia with the frequent Cape to Australia services, thus bringing mail to Mauritius much more rapidly than directly from the Cape. But the direct Cape-Mauritius service has just been renewed and Lund's proposal was not taken up. If it had, the strategic importance of the atoll would have been more apparent. The interest of the Imperial Government was great enough, however, for H. M. S. Rambler under Commander the Hon. F. C. P. Vereker, R. N., to make the first thorough hydrographic survey of the northern half of the lagoon in 1885. Vereker's survey with Moresby's more general survey of the southern lagoon, remains the basis of the published charts.

In spite of its turbulence, the coaling station period was a brief one. In 1888, after only six years' operation, which had proved unprofitable, the Orient Company ceased using Diego Garcia and sold its facilities to Lund. James Spurs left the atoll and went to Aldabra. It is not known how long Lund continued working, but by 1900 Diego Garcia was once again simply a supplier of coconut products.

E. The Twentieth Century

After the withdrawal of the coaling stations, the atoll reverted to a plantation economy. The buildings at East Point were renewed, and a chapel added in 1895. Later a church and a jetty with light railway were added, and East Point emerged as the main commercial center of the atoll. The buildings at Minni Minni, Middle Island and East Island were abandoned and are now in ruins or have disappeared. Point Marianne is little more than an outstation of East Point, where all processing is carried out, and the large manager's

house at Marianne has disappeared. Figures for oil production given by Sergne in an unpublished manuscript dated 1900 are remarkably similar to those of 1864:

Plantation	Lessee	Oil production, gallons	Litres
EAST POINT	M. LIENARD	50-60,000	227-273,000
POINT MARIANNE	M. LEVIEUX	30-35,000	136-164,000
	M. LIENARD		
MINNI MINNI	M. MARGERY	16-20,000	73-91,000

But in spite of this apparent stability, the industry was about to undergo a major technological change. In 1903, the Government of Seychelles introduced copra platforms into the islands to dry copra by a combination of sun and artificial heat, and by about 1910 copra was the main coconut product exported from the islands to Mauritius. The "Oil Islands", as the Chagos group had been [illegible] Islands no longer. It is not known when exactly the change occurred at Diego Garcia, but presumably it was at about the same time as on other [illegible] Islands (Dupont 1938). Wiehe (1939) gives a detailed account of the plantation of the coconut plantations and of copra production on Diego Garcia by Messrs Banhos and Salomon immediately before the Second World War: at this time the atoll was yielding about 5.3 million nuts a year. In 1967, the copra production was 707 tons, half the total for the British Indian Ocean Territory. This must represent a yield of at least 4.5 million nuts, and suggests that the annual production has not greatly changed over the last century.

Diego Garcia had brief notoriety during the early months of the First World War. In 1914 two German warships Bismarck and Marie had anchored in the lagoon, and two days after they left the British, heavy cruiser Hampshire

arrived with the Empress of Russia, which entered the lagoon (Hoyt 1967): the powers were clearly interested in oceanic anchorages. When war broke out the German cruiser Emden was in the Indian Ocean, and during its pursuit by English warships called at Diego Garcia on 9 October 1914 to coal and clean its bottom. At this time the local inhabitants were unaware that war had been declared. The Assistant Manager "came into the wardroom and made very good practice with the iced whisky and soda. For us the conversation became interesting from the moment that we recognized that this manager and the inhabitants had no idea that there was a war on in the world" (Hohenzollern 1928, 133). Battle damage to the ship was explained as having been caused by storms; the ship took on a large live pig, fish and fruit in return for wine and whisky, and it left on 10 September shortly before English warships arrived. The Emden was finally caught and destroyed at Cocos-Keeling on 9 November 1914.

The strategic value of the atoll became apparent during the Second World War. Following the Japanese attack on Colombo in April 1942 and heavy British naval losses in the central Indian Ocean, it was decided to develop Addu Atoll in the Maldives, previously used as a refueling station and anchorage, as a military base (Roskill 1956, 25). Diego Garcia became one of a number of places used as fueling and minor operational bases for naval craft and flying boats (Kirby 1958, 58; Roskill 1956, 33), and defended by six-inch guns. A wrecked Catalina still lies on the beach at East Point, but the military interest was short-lived and the installations were in decay at the time of Ommanney's visit in 1948 (Ommanney 1952, 233). Several books by Thompson (1946, 1949, 1956) give a largely fictional account of the atoll in war-time.

In 1965, Diego Garcia, together with the rest of the Chagos Archipelago, was detached from the administration of Mauritius and incorporated in the new British Indian Ocean Territory. An agreement was entered into between the

United Kingdom and the United States in 1966, under which either party could have the use of any part of the Territory for military purposes for not less than fifty years. H. M. S. Vidal under Captain C. R. K. Roe, R. N., made a detailed hydrographic survey of the entire lagoon in 1967. Military use of the atoll had been contemplated for many years, and Bourne (1886b, 391) made the following comment after his visit eighty years ago: "I have even heard that it is proposed to protect the island by some sort of fortification, but how this is to be done, and of what use it would be to fortify an island 10 feet high, which might be completely commanded by a ship sailing outside of it, I am at a loss to know".

F. Introduction of animals and plants

There is little documentary evidence of the introduction of plants and animals to Diego Garcia, though from the beginning of the sixteenth century it was general practice to land sheep, goats, cattle, and even rabbits and hares on uninhabited islands in the Indian Ocean to provide a future food supply. Some introduction of plants probably took place in 1784 when the ship-loads of soil were brought from Bombay. By the end of the eighteenth century pigs and dogs were being bred in the islands for export, and bees and poultry had been introduced (Findlay 1882). Donkeys had been imported into the Chagos Archipelago and other islands by the 1840's to work the oil mills. There is an early description of these animals on Agalega (Leduc 1897-1906; Scott 1961, 145-146), where they "appear to thrive well ... and breed very fast" (Anon, 1845, 479).

Moresby in the late 1830's recorded maize, tobacco, cabbages, "greens", sweet potatoes, onions, carrots, turnips, "leaks", garlic, "and all the common vegetables cultivated in India, with limes and citrons" (Anon, 1845, 480). He also noted that "pompions and plantains grow wild and are for introducing

Artpcarpus to the Archipelago: "Of the bread-fruit tree, when Captain Moresby first visited these islands, they had none; but he brought about thirty young plants from Ceylon, which succeeded well, as also did the Malabar yam" (Anon. 1845, 480).

Bourne in 1886 found bananas, custard apples, bitter oranges and a few other tropical fruits in the gardens at East Point, Minni Minni and Point Marianne. According to him attempts to introduce potatoes and vegetables had been defeated by rats.

In addition to donkeys and rats, there were pigs and poultry in abundance in Moresby's time, together with feral cats (Anon, 1845). "Among the occupations of these Negroes was the feeding of swine, with which the dwellers on many of these islands lived in terms of considerable intimacy" (Anon. 1845, 483).

In 1967 donkeys were seen, generally in groups of 3-12, near the northwest point, south of East Point, along the southeast side, and south of Point Marianne. The population may number over one hundred, and individuals are occasionally shot for food. Rats are extremely numerous and are seen constantly during daylight running upon coconut trunks. There is a bounty of three cents a rat for each body produced. A similar bounty thirty years ago bought in more than thirty thousand rats a year (Wiehe 1939, 23). Chickens, cats and dogs are plentiful in the settlements.

Weeds and cultivated plants have been described in Chapters 11 and 12, and introduced insects, particularly the rhinoceros beetle Oryctes rhinoceros, in Chapter 14.

G. Conservation

Little attention has been paid at Diego Garcia to conservation: the atoll has simply been used as a supplier of coconut products, and to a lesser extent

of dried fish and turtles, for Mauritius. Both the Green and Hawksbill turtle used to nest here in some numbers: the Hawksbill from December-March, and the Green at all seasons. The early settlers found the frigate birds, boobies, noddies, terns, herons and tropic birds to "breed on these islands. ... (They) are considered good eating; the feathers, too, make excellent bedding" (Anon. 1845, 483).

The first practical conservation measures were taken by James Spurs, when manager in the 1870's. He forbade the killing of sea birds, turtles and [illegible]e (Birgus) on his estate, to prevent any decline in numbers. As a [illegible]ncy of Mauritius until 1965, the conservation legislation of that Colony app[illegible] to Diego Garcia, but in the absence of enforcing authority or of any clear need for conservation it is unlikely that much attention was paid to it. The main statutes affecting conservation in the Chagos islands were the Exportation of Plumage Birds Ordinances 1914 and the Wild Birds (Protection) Proclamation 1939, each with a schedule of birds. The Lesser Dependencies Importation of Animals statute 1933 prohibited the import of any mammal, bird, fish, reptile or living insect in the Chagos islands. Other Mauritius conservation legislation is relevant only to the Mascarenes proper (Lane 1946a, 1946b).

Following the creation of the British Indian Ocean Territory in 1965, its Commissioner took power by Ordinance 2 of 1968 to make regulations for the protection and preservation of wild life in the Territory. These powers are intended not only to cover interference with animals but also "any change or alteration" in an animal's environment. Regulations under this Ordinance (S. I. No. 11 of 1968) have prohibited the taking of Green Turtle throughout the Territory, and also the possession or sale of any turtle products, from 13 August 1968.

REPORT BY IVAN DUPONT, ACTING MAGISTRATE FOR THE LESSER DEPENDENCIES WRITTEN IN 1884

The island now belongs to the company styled "the Societe Huiliere de Maurice", and the three establishments have been amalgamated since my last visit, in April 1883. Point Marianne continues to be worked by a submanager under the control of M. LeConte, the head manager of the island; but Minni Minni establishment has been closed, and the working materials and animals taken to East Point.

Thirty-eight vessels have called at Diego Garcia since my last visit in May last, of which seven during my stay at the island.

One of the aforesaid vessels carried 500 Japanese pilgrims for Mecca, who almost all landed at East Point.

The total population of the island on the day of my arrival including 21 Europeans in the pay of the coaling companies was 251 males and 105 females.

I inspected the camp of the laborers which I did not find in a very good state of repair or of cleanliness, and on my calling the attention of the Manager to this fact, he stated that most of the huts belonged to the laborers, who had built them themselves, and that he had no means of compelling them to keep their huts in good order nor of enforcing cleanliness in the camp.

No register was kept by the Manager and he gave for reason that the huts belonging mainly to the laborers he did not think it was required. I however desired him to keep one, and I advised him to give up the system of allowing the laborers to erect huts for themselves.

On January 4th 1884, I proceeded to East Island and Middle Island, which are now occupied by the Orient company. They are situated at the entrance of the Bay of Diego Garcia.

East islet is occupied by the agent of the company, Mr. J. Spurs and is about 40 acres in area. It is covered with "bois manioc" and "veloutiers". Some trees known by the name of "bois blanc" and some coconut trees, about 60 in number grow on this islet.

Middle islet, on which the laborers of the company are stationed is about 25 acres in area. It is also covered over with the "bois manioc" and veloutiers and a few trees known hy the name of Mapon grow on it.

The water on these islets is very brackish and can only be used by the laborers for cooking and washing purposes. The water drunk by the laborers is rain-water, and water brought from East point.

The Orient company have sent Mr. Spurs an apparatus for distilling water for the use of the laborers. It was to be put up and worked on Middle Island ly after my departure.

modation on Middle islet was of canvas but some huts were nearing letion. A hospital was also being completed.

REPORT BY IVANOFF DUPONT, MAGISTRATE, 22 DECEMBER 1884

The population of Diego Garcia is as follows:

MALE	191
FEMALE	79
CHILDREN	50

There are only two estates, Minni Minni being absorbed by East Point. In the first ten months of 1834, 31 vessels called at the island. One of the steamers was HMS Magpie (Commander Tolly C. P. Vercke. She took 76 tons of coal from the Orient Company.

"On the 9th of January 1884, (we) arrived at Diego Garcia. The sailing ship 'Windsor Castle' Captain Raymond (arrived) with 1344 tons of coals for Lund and Company. This ship anchored at East Point."

"On 24 February, while in a drunken fit, Captain Raymond landed at East Point with 16 men armed with loaded guns; had the Union Jack hoisted at the top of a tree in front of the manager's house; paroded his men; had a volley fired at the house (then unoccupied), patrolled about, informed the manager that he had taken possession of the island in the name of the British Government, and appointed Mr. LeConte (the head manager) in writing the Lt.-Governor. He left East Point on the 25th, anchored in the middle of the bay, opposite Point Marianne, and left Diego Garcia on 27 February."

On 16 February last the steamer "Natal" belonging to Lund and Company bound from England to Australia, came to East Point with 90 passengers on board, 8 of whom were suffering from measles. A child died the next day from that disease, and it was attempted to take the body to East Point to be buried, but on the refusal of Mr. Le Conte to allow it for fear that the disease might spread out on the island, the steamer left the next day with

the body which was to be thrown overboard outside the bay.

Messrs. Lund and Company employ 45 laborers who are camped at East Point. They are all single men and Mr. Le Conte thinks that this is the cause of disorders in the camp at East Point.

The camp which has been built for the laborers is in good condition.

East and Middle Islands

The population of these islands is:

MALE 76

FEMALE 24

CHILDREN 12

Inspected the camp which is now complete and consists of two rows of good and a hospital.

The laborers are mainly Mauritians, Malagashes and Africans but the work obtained from these men is so unsatisfactory and their absences from work so frequent, that it is thought of introducing Chinamen to replace them, I was informed. On 29 October the last of the Orient Steamer "Lusitania" put in for coals. But so many of the laborers of the Orient Company were absent and refused to do extra work, for which they receive extra pay that Mr. Spurs was obliged to apply for coiliers from the agent of Lund and Company.

The sanitary condition of the laborers is not good. Several of them have suffered from scurvey. The distilling apparatus mentioned in my last report has not been put up, but several iron tanks have been put to gather rain water and a well has been dug which gives drinkable water.

EXTRACT FROM "REPORT ON THE DEPENDENCIES OF MAURITIUS" BY D. WERNER, circa 1824

DIEGO GARCIA

Diego Garcia (the center of) is situated in latitude 07.20.03 south and longitude 72.29.17 East at first size it appears to be a very large island but on a nearer approach it is only composed of a narrow strip of land nearly the shape of a horse-shoe, inside of which is a bay large enough for the whole of the British navy. The greatest length of the Bay is 11 1/2 geographical miles and the greatest breadth 5 1/2 miles. The greatest breadth of land is the North West point 1 1/2 mile and least breadth is only 200 feet on the Eastern side.

At the mouth of the bay there are three small islands. In coming from the eastward care should be taken not to mistake the middle isle for the western as the best passage is between the Middle isle and the Western. In coming from the east you must pass two islands, or one coming from the west.

There is a split running from the Middle isle to the west for nearly a mile, but a person at the mast head can easily see any danger on entering. A reef extends from the main land to the West island.

In entering the bay stand to the westward till you bring the Western isle North in 15 fathom, you must not stand any further than this as there is a patch of rocks, a cables length from the shore, on the other tack you ought to bring the Western isle N 50 W and the Eastern one N 25 East with 13 fathoms hard bottom, then you may stand boldly across, keeping a look out at the mast head for two or three patches of Coral in the middle of the bay.

The best anchorage is at the top of the bay opposite the entrance, bringing the Establishment called Minni Minni S 30 E in 12 fathoms and soft bottom.

I would advise a ship making the island in the evening to stand off and on

to the westward in the southeast monsoon, rather than anchor in the channel between the islands, as the tide runs out 3 or 4 knots per hour.

Diego Garcia is divided into four estates, Viz. M. Cayeux, M. Cayeux aime, Pattee and Beluec and M. Laportaire, the latter of which is by far the largest and best, in fact better than all the other three. Diego Garcia contains 5093 acres divided into the four estates viz.

M. LAPORTAIRE	2590
PATTEE AND BELUEC	1348
M. CAYEUX AIME	578
M. CAYEUX	577
TOTAL	5093

land is extremely low, many parts on the western side in the center o. land is below high water mark and produces a marsh nearly the whole length of that side, and opens to one of very considerable extent at the extreme end where the land is widest. There is no soil whatever except what is brought from Mauritius, the water is tolerably good. The produce is Cocoa Nuts and honey of a delicious quality.

This island has been for many years the depot for lepers and must have been formerly an eligible situation, as at one time great quantitites of turtle were taken, but latterly they have become extremely scarce.

Lt. Blair was sent to survey this part of the sea by the East India Company, but as he had not laid down some dangerous banks which I had the opportunity of seeing I considered it my duty to construct a new chart showing these places the chief of which is the Erim bank between the six islands and the Eagle islands, also the (Lintues) shoal near Peros Banhos.

This chart takes in part of the speakers bank the soundings on which are much less than marked on those of Horsburgh. Most part of the soundings were

from actual observations on board the Government vessels. The forms of the groups of small islands have been copied from the larger plans and are as exact as the nature of the chart will allow.