



# INSTITUTE OF COMMONWEALTH STUDIES

## University of London

### IDENTITY STATEMENT

<b>Reference:</b>	M915
<b>Title:</b>	West India Committee
<b>Dates:</b>	circa 1769-1924
<b>Level:</b>	fonds
<b>Extent and Medium:</b>	16 reels of microfilm
<b>Name of Creator:</b>	West India Committee

### CONTEXT

**Biographical/Administrative History:** The West India Committee was formed in the 18th century by a permanent association of London merchants engaged in the West Indian trade, and absentee owners of West Indian estates who lived in London and its environs. The interests of both planters and merchants appear to have been first joined on a permanent basis in 1775: before then, the two groups tended to promote their separate interests except on occasions when their usually different priorities became united. The Committee acted as a pressure group for West Indian interests, principally in the support of the sugar and rum trades and, in the first decades of its existence, in opposition to the abolition of the slave trade and then slavery. Although the campaign against slavery eventually won the day, the West India Committee did manage to secure improved compensation terms for the planters and merchants it represented. Following the abolition of slavery in 1834, and a short period of virtual inactivity, the Committee shifted its work firstly towards the encouragement of immigrant labour from India, China and Africa (to replace the emancipated slave labour), and then to opposing the removal of preferential sugar duties for West Indian sugar. Later in the 19th century, although a more diversified range of produce was being developed, cane sugar still remained a significant element of the West Indian economy and there were further moves to support its success against the new threat of beet sugar which was now being grown in Europe. Beet sugar benefited from bounties paid by the Government as it favoured home-produced beet sugars for a variety of reasons. The West India Committee was instrumental in mounting a strong anti-bounty campaign, as well as seeking alternative markets for West Indian cane sugar in the United States. Bounties were eventually abolished throughout Europe in 1902. Riding on this success, a concerted effort was made to widen the interests of the Committee beyond sugar alone, to the promotion of West Indian trade in general. This resulted in an increase in membership of the Committee which in turn led to a revision of its administrative structure and, in 1904, the award of a charter of incorporation. The enlarged membership included many members residing in the West Indies, and the Committee's overall knowledge of West Indian affairs

improved as a result. Its role became very much a representative one, although it was still perceived as an organisation for the support of the sugar trade, reflecting sugar's continuing dominance in the region. At various times in the first half of the 20th century the Committee sought to become agents or trade representatives for individual colonies or the West Indies as a whole, but it did not achieve comprehensive or lasting success. Later in the 20th century, with the independence of individual West Indian countries, the role of the West India Committee had to further adapt to reflect the changing political and economic scene. With the breakdown of former colonial affiliations, and changes in world trade as a whole, the Committee's traditional role in representing British interests in its West Indian colonies expanded to encompass trade between the Caribbean region as a whole, and the European Community; and in addition, trade between the Caribbean and other parts of the world, particularly the United States and other American countries. This alteration in its sphere of activities resulted in the creation of significant autonomous bodies within the West India Committee: the Caribbean Council for Europe (CCE), and the Caribbean Trade Advisory Group (Caritag). The CCE in particular played an important part in seeking the continuance of trade agreements between the two regions, in the face of conflicts of interest arising as a result of European Union.

## **CONTENT**

**Scope and Content:** Includes minutes of meetings of the West India Committee and sub-committees, 1769-1924; minutes of the British and Colonial Anti-Bounty Association, 1887-1890; note books and letter books of Edwin Fitzpatrick, John F. Alleyne, Robert Reece, Thomas D. Hills, William D. Bruce.

## **ACCESS AND USE**

<b>Language of Scripts:</b>	English
<b>System of Arrangement:</b>	As microfilmed
<b>Conditions of Access:</b>	Open for research although at least 24 hours' notice is required.

- M915 reel 1**      **West India Merchants minutes**      **1769-1783, 1803-1804**
1. Minutes, 11.4.1769 - 27.4.1779.
  2. Minutes, 1.6.1779 - 26.8.1783.
  3. Minutes, 29.4.1803- 4.7.1804. Indexed
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- M915 reel 2**      **West India Merchants minutes**      **1794 March 28 - 1843 July 7**
- Minutes:
- 1794 March 28 - 1802 December 17 (original volume 393 pages, indexed);
  - 1804 September 11-1827 July 13 (original volume 428 pages);
  - 1828 January 9 - 1843 July 7 (original volume 243 pages).
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- M915 reel 3**      **West India Planter and Merchants minutes**      **1785 May 14 - 1822 March 12**
1. Minutes 14.5.1785 - 21.12.1792. Indexed.
  2. Minutes 12.2.1793 - 15.4.1801. Indexed.
  3. Minutes 10.12.1801 - 9.6.1804. Indexed.
  4. Minutes 14.2.1805 - 12.3.1822. Indexed.
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- M915 reel 4**      **West India Planters and Merchants meeting minutes**      **1822 March 23-1834 February 21**
1. Minutes 22.3.1822 - 8.4.1829. Indexed.      Original volume 408 pages;
  2. Minutes 28.4.1829 - 21.2.1834. Original volume 351 pages.
- At the end of this volume are several memoranda, memorials and petitions from the West India Planters and Merchants to the government regarding slavery and conditions in the West Indies.
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- M915 reel 5**      **West India Committee minutes**      **1834 April 9 - 1889 January 17**
1. Standing Committee meeting minutes 9.4.1834 - 3.5.1850. Indexed
  2. Standing Committee and Acting Committee minutes 22.2.1872 - 19.12.1878.

3. Acting Committee, Country Committee, General Purposes Committee meetings minutes 26.2.1882 - 17.1.1889.

**M915  
reel 6**

**West India Committee minutes**

**1829 May 20  
- 1901 June  
27**

1. Country committees, General Purposes Committee, West India Committee, Acting Committee, Executive Committee meetings minutes 26.6.1890 - 27.6.1901. [This reel appears to start in the middle of a volume.]

2. Acting Committee minutes 20.5.1829 - 9.7.1833. Indexed.

**M915  
reel 7**

**West India Committee minutes**

**1833 June  
17 - 1866  
September  
25**

1(a) Acting Committee minutes 17.6.1833- 6.6.1843. Indexed.

(b) Sub Committee established to consider the provisions of the Bill to Abolish Slavery minutes 13.7.1833 - 17.7.1833.

(c) Sub Committee on East India Company's petition for equalization of duties minutes 13.3.1840 - 30.3.1840.

2. Acting Committee minutes 13.6.1843 - 10.12.1844.

3. Acting Committee minutes 9.1.1852 - 19.2.1857.

4. Acting Committee minutes 30.1.1860 - 17.2.1860. 114 pages.

5(a) Memoranda and letters concerning sugar duties, immigration and slavery.

(b) West India Committee meeting minutes 18.2.1860 - 25.9.1866.

**M915  
reel 8**

**West India Committee minutes**

**1845  
January 14 -  
1851 July  
25**

Acting Committee minutes

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| <b>M915<br/>reel 9</b>  | <b>Minutes, lists of members</b><br><br>1. Executive Committee minutes 11.2.1909 - 12.10.1916.<br><br>2. Executive Committee minutes 1.7.1901 - 7.7.1904.<br><br>3. British and Colonial Anti Bounty Association minutes 17.2.1887 - 13.5.1890.<br><br>4. List of members of the West India Committee compiled circa 1831 [also on reel 15].  | <b>circa 1831,<br/>1887-1916</b>            |
| <b>M915<br/>reel 10</b> | <b>West India Committee minutes</b><br><br>Volume of various subcommittees' minutes (country, freight, exhibitions, etc). Indexed.  | <b>1903 June<br/>11 - 1924<br/>March 19</b> |
| <b>M915<br/>reel 11</b> | <b>West India Committee minutes</b><br><br>1. Volume of miscellaneous material - press cuttings, letters, list of the governors of Barbados. Name on fly leaf - Edwin Fitzpatrick, St. Michael's Cathedral. Compiled circa 1934. 275 pages.<br><br>2. Minutes of the Board of Commissioners... of Grenada and St. Vincent, 29.6.1795 - 1.9.1797.<br><br>3. Sub Committee of West India Planters & Merchants appointed to oppose the abolition of the slave trade minutes 23.1.1792 - 7.6.1804.<br><br>4. Sub Committees 15.1.1828 - 10.3.1830. Indexed.<br><br>5. Literary Sub Committee of West India Planters and Merchants minutes 30.6.1823 - 23.12.1829. | <b>1792<br/>January 23 -<br/>circa 1934</b> |

6. Literary Sub Committee minutes 6.12.1830 - 30.3.1839. Indexed. 54 pages.

7. Meeting of members of the House of Commons interested in the West Indian colonies minutes 2 June 1830.

8. Jamaica Standing Committee minutes 20.1.1910 - 10.12.1924.

9. Demerara and Berbice Committee minutes 13.11.1826 - 5.3.1830 (also on reel 15).

10. Memorials, petitions and press cuttings concerning rum duties circa 1825-1830.

11. Reports and statements to the Commission on British Guiana 1870. Minutes of the British Guiana Proprietors meeting May 1870 - 11.12.1871.

<b>M915 reel 12</b>	<b>West India Committee submissions and agendas</b>	<b>1830-1831, 1894 January - 1898 February</b>
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1. Submissions to the Board of Trade enquiry into the distressed state of the West Indian colonies 1830-1831. [Includes statistics of production from various West Indian estates.]

2. Agenda and notes for meetings 12.1.1894 - 17.2.1898.

<b>M915 reel 13</b>	<b>Documents relating to petitions to Governor of British Guiana, statistics on sugar trade</b>	<b>1815, circa 1908</b>
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1. Documents concerning petitions to the governor of British Guiana, 1815.

2. Statistics concerning the sugar trade, compiled circa 1908.

<b>M915 reel 14</b>	<b>Miscellaneous documents</b>	<b>c1881-1883</b>
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Transcript of letters and statistics. Indexed. 55 pages

**M915  
reel 15**

**Committee minutes**

**1799  
October -  
circa 1831**

1. List of members circa 1831 (also on reel 9)
2. Demerara and Berbice Committee minutes  
13.11.1826 - 5.3.1830 (also on reel 11)
3. Sub Committee of West India Merchants on sugar  
duties, minutes 5.10.1799 - 30.7.1800.

**M915  
reel 16**

**Minutes, account book, letter books**

**circa 17th  
century -  
1874  
October 4**

1. Letter book of John Foster Alleyne. Copies of letters  
to friends and his manager of estates in Barbados.  
5.7.1799- 21.2.1804. Indexed.
2. Manuscript entitled 'Robert Reece Ms '. Comprises:  
(a) Transcripts of National Archives and Barbadian  
Archives? material concerning Barbados in the 17th  
century [in no order].  
(b) Page "Robert Reece April 20, London 1856".  
(c) Thomas Daniel Hills. Scraps of the History of  
Barbados 20 Oct 1874.
3. Meetings of West India Committee re sugar duties  
minutes 11.2.1825 - 14.6.1830. 169 pages. [Includes  
some press cuttings].
4. Account book circa 1826 - 1838. [Tables of people  
and plantations]. Indexed.
5. Volume of miscellaneous notes and printed items on  
Barbados. Letters included are addressed to William  
Downing Bruce circa 1845-1850.
6. West India Committee letter book and memoranda  
26.9.1866 - 4.4.1870. Indexed.