

# BITTERSWEET

## A STORY OF FOUR SUGAR PLANTATIONS

### GROWING THE SUGAR CANE



This alternative picture of sugar cane emphasises the joints in the stem.

#### List of Cane Pieces on Blue Mountain Plantation 1<sup>st</sup> Jan'y 1785

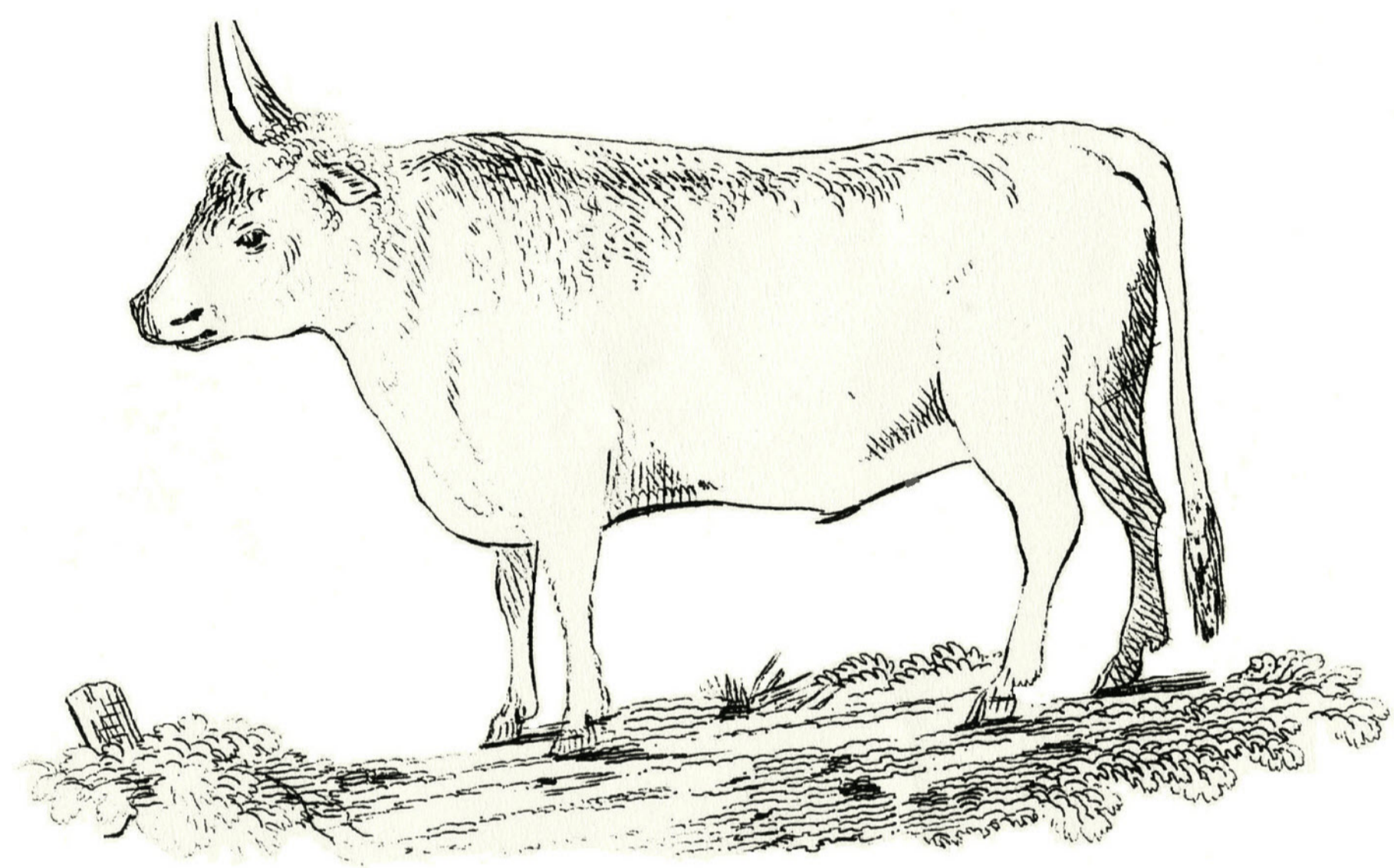
Supper Piece	27
White Piece	25
Coopers	15
Bottom	15
Bottom	12
Bottom	7
Bottom	12
Bottom	12
Bottom	6
Bottom	4
Bottom	14
Bottom	13
Bottom	12
Bottom	6
Bottom	20
Bottom	13
Bottom	19
Bottom	9
Bottom	14
Bottom	12
Bottom	13
Bottom	8
Bottom	15
Bottom	20
Bottom	10
Bottom	6
Bottom	14
Bottom	15
Bottom	24
Bottom	11
Bottom	9
Bottom	14
Total	130

This above is a List of the Land that was & probably will be planted with Cane by the end of this year. But at present many of the above Pieces are in culture.

This lists the names and sizes of the cane pieces on Blue Mountain Plantation in 1785.

A new cane piece was started by digging a series of trenches. A field gang of thirty slaves working with hoes could trench two acres per day.

The cane was planted by placing cuttings from old plants end to end in the trenches and covering these lightly with soil. Provided there was enough rain, the cuttings soon sprouted at each joint. When the rows of young cane were one or two feet high, they were weeded several times and manured with a mixture of cattle dung and cane trash. Rats were a great menace at this stage. By the sixth or seventh month the canes were too tall and thickly sprouting for further cultivation. They were ready for harvesting once they reached their full height of eight feet.



Cattle were used as beasts of burden, in the crushing mills and as a source of manure for the crops.

The sugar cane ripened in fourteen to eighteen months. It was harvested during the driest season – from January to May – when the sugar content of the mature cane was at a maximum. Once harvested the cane would spoil within a few hours. Therefore the plants on the different cane pieces should not ripen all at once.

The ripe canes were cut by hand with bills [curved knives]. The outer leaves were removed and the stalks bundled together ready for the mill.

#### Blue Mountain Plantation Journal, 1785

**January:** began the crop on the 19<sup>th</sup> of this month and made five hogsheads of sugar. In the course of this month canes were cut from Marly Hill Piece and from Sue's Piece.

**February** ... canes were cut from Marly Hill Piece, Cow Pen Piece, Sue's Piece, Cooper's Shop Piece, Dame Piece and Middle Piece ...

**March** ... canes were cut from Mamma Gut Piece, Bottom Piece, Negro House Piece and Guinea Corn Piece.



Tea



Sugar