

Forbach Sugar Estate

Situated at a distance of about 14 kilometres from Aapravasi Ghat, the Forbach Estate is one of the well-known sugar plantations in the north of Mauritius. It has played a prominent role in enhancing the lives of the Indentured Labourers and in fostering the interests of the sugar industry in Mauritius.

Its history dates back to January 1816, when Mr Joseph Staub, a former French army officer who settled in Mauritius, purchased an initial plot of *2 arpents and 44 perches* of land for 75 piastes. He progressively made different types of purchases to expand the estate to a surface of around 58 arpents in 1818. In that same year, he erected a sugar mill which was a large stone structure and part of his land was brought under sugar cane cultivation.



Fig 8. Overview of ruins at Forbach Sugar Mill in 1950 (Source: Mauritius Chamber of Agriculture)

Between the late 1810s and 1830s, Forbach's workforce consisted of slaves of Creole origin or born in Mauritius. They worked under the supervision of *Slave Commandeurs* who reported directly to their master, MrStaub. Even after his death in August 1827, the inheritors of Staub continued to expand the estate so that in 1842, the Forbach estate covered an area of 743 *arpents*, when it was finally sold to a group of individuals namely Aristide Aubin, Vincent BourgaultDucoudray and H. Déroulède.

An important characteristic of Forbach is that it was one of the few plantations in the British Mauritius to have a windmill which was used for the processing of sugar cane. However, this windmill finally closed down in 1852. As at 1872, archival records show that the Forbach Sugar Estate employed some 405 indentured labourers, many of whom had re-engaged themselves and 10 Creoles for the daily labour on the estate fields. During 1875, as part of the centralisation process of the Mauritian sugar industry, Forbach was taken over by Labourdonnais Sugar Estate, which covered an area of 1390 arpents. Between the 1840s and early 20th century, indentured Labourers formed the backbone of Forbach's workforce. The archival records indicate that the Indian workers were well treated and were provided with adequate food, clothing and medical treatment.

As at today, various structures such as the camp with the barracks for the Indian labourers, the windmill tower, and the chimney and water tank still exist.



Fig.9 Ruins of Forbach Windmill in 2009 (Source: AGTF Collection)

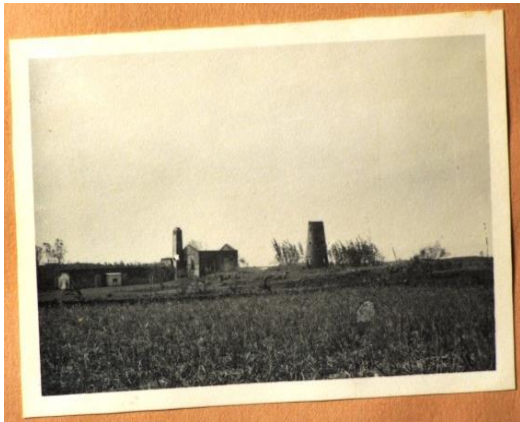


Fig 10. Overview of ruins at Forbach in 1950

(Source: Mauritius Chamber of Agriculture)



Fig 11 . Overview of ruins at Forbach in 2009 (Source: AGTF Collection)

Among the sugar mills that were still operative until 1960, only the chimneys remain. At Forbach Sugar Estate, the chimney is actually in a bad state .Urgent restoration and preservation works need to be started soon to prevent further degradation and restore its original view.



Fig 12. Ruins of Chimney at Forbach in 2009 (Source: AGTF Collection)

The old dairy building exists to this date and will soon accommodate the 'ageing' section of a new agricultural Rhum Distillery